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vol. 8, no. 2
February 2004

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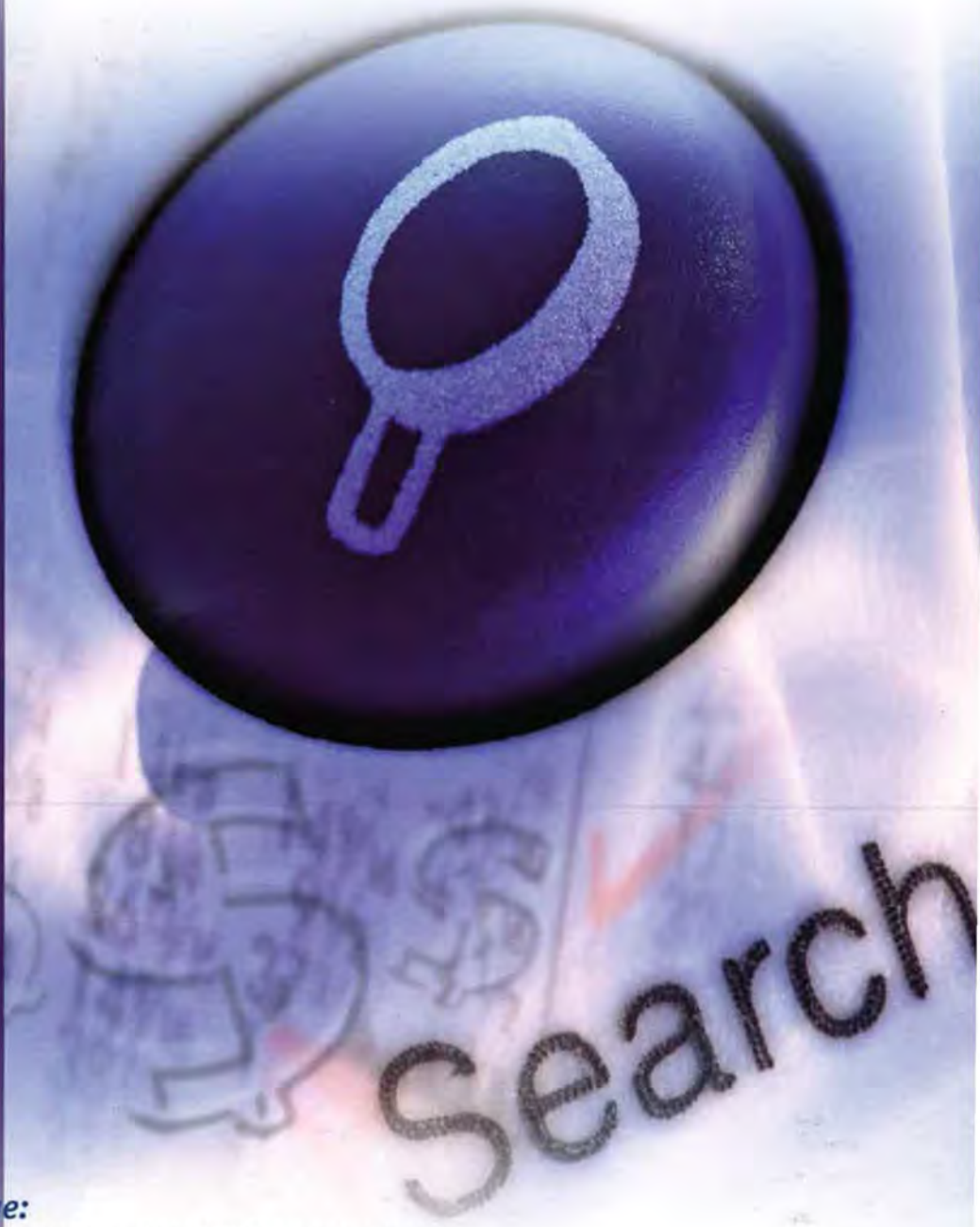

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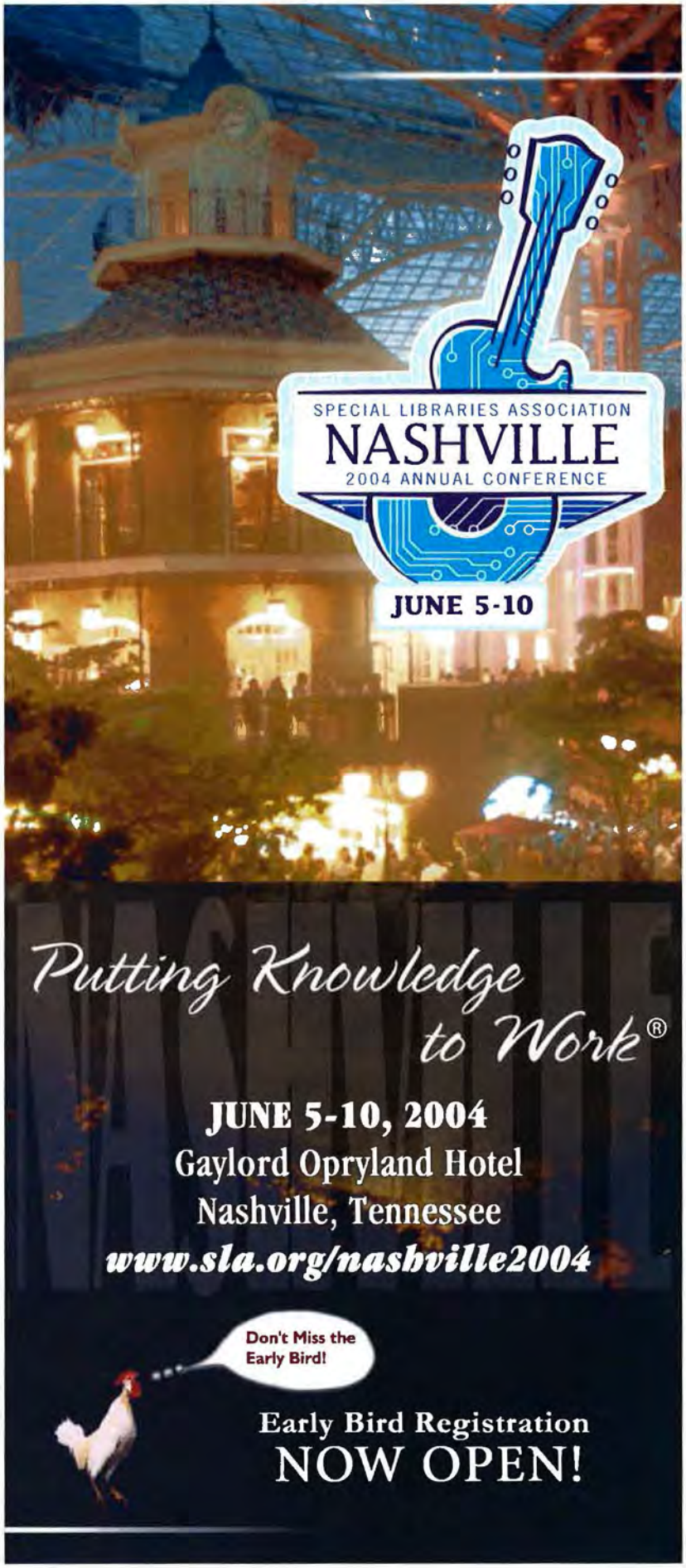

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Leadership Can Be Contagious This Time of the Year!

By the time this issue reaches your desk, I will have returned from the SLA Leadership Summit in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. I always find leadership conferences very resourceful and enlightening. Meeting and networking with many people who care about leading SLA is an asset to my own development and growth as your executive director. And for SLA members, no matter what position you hold, leadership skills are valuable for advancing your career and evolving your personal style in everything you do.

Leadership is a continual learning experience. It is certainly not an organized process; rather, it can be messy and chaotic. In a perfect world, leadership is about aligning and engaging the energies and actions of people to create a common purpose and vision worthy of commitment. In reality, it takes real focus and attention to relationships and values to drive those relationships. Some researchers say that effective leaders appeal to a higher sense of purpose. They do this by addressing basic rewards and higher emotional needs, such as self-actualization, and by developing a sense of commitment in their followers. I say that leadership skills can, and should, be exhibited in any position, no matter the title. Some require more effort with less recognition. And followers should be expected to lead, too!

As your professional association, we want to support all individuals with the skills and the training inherent in the information profession. Those who are well-qualified to expand their horizons and take on new and exciting roles are the future of SLA. My recent travels have afforded me firsthand knowledge of the value SLA leaders provide to the Association. We at SLA headquarters applaud their hard work, enthusiasm, and volunteerism. Without their dedicated spirit, we would not be able to make as many strides in the profession.

As the new year moves forward, I encourage each of you to venture into the SLA Leadership program. SLA's chapters, divisions, caucuses, and committees offer great opportunities to become involved in shaping the future of your profession, developing your own skills, and enhancing your network of leaders. The Association offers countless opportunities in a supportive environment, to help you focus on what matters in your career. Learning the skills you need to be a leader will give you the guidance to take appropriate actions for the challenges you face every day.

Contact your chapter president or your division chair to see if opportunities exist that match your abilities. If you would like to serve on an association-wide appointment, please send an e-mail to Ethel Salonen SLA's president-elect, at salonen@mpi.com. More information on SLA's various appointed opportunities are listed on the SLA website.

I also want to remind you that the Association's spring election is only a few weeks away. Your ballots were mailed on January 26th, so you should have them by now. If not, send an e-mail to stephanie@sla.org. The election is your opportunity to select the Association's next leaders who will best represent your views for the profession. Your vote is very important because it gives you a voice. More important is that your vote will chart the future path of SLA.

Janice R. Lachance

Janice R Lachance

SLA Executive Director

making news

SLA Virtual Seminars:

Keeping Current: Info Pro Secrets
February 18, 2004
2:00 pm-3:30 pm ET
Your Virtual Seminar Leader: Gary Price, co-author, The Invisible Web, and editor, Virtual Acquisition Shelf & News Desk.

Description
The online world of Web searching changes on a minute-by-minute basis and our speaker manages to juggle his life to keep on top. With work and personal responsibilities, are you able to manage the never-ending battle of keeping up and knowing what's available? This fast-paced seminar focuses on the latest happenings with Web search engines, cool tools to make Web searching more productive, concepts and ideas of how to differentiate your work from what your clients can find online, as well as some insights and tools for monitoring what's new and making keeping up easier in the future. Take many learnings from this session and not only be more productive, but design your own Web search update for your customers.

Virtual Seminar Only: Member $190; Nonmember $240

Virtual Seminar Plus V-Pak: Member $250; Nonmember $300

V-Pak Only: Member $105; Nonmember $155 (The V-Pak includes an audio tape of the session, hard copy of handouts, and instructions on how to access the Powerpoint presentation on the Web.)

When you register, your location becomes a virtual seminar site and you can host as many people as you like for one low site fee! The cost is per site, not per person. So be sure to invite your colleagues to learn with you!

Intranet Research, Analysis & Marketing: Now That You've Built It-- Get Them to Come
March 17, 2004
2:00 pm-3:30 pm ET
Your Virtual Seminar Leader, Jim Sterne of Target Marketing, is the author of many books, including World Wide Marketing, Customer Service on the Internet, and E-mail Marketing.

Description
Now that you have provided your clients with desktop access to your products and services, do you know which intranet services are the most liked? The most used? The least appreciated? How do you let your organization know what a wonderful resource you've created?

This seminar focuses on:
• Internal market research
What do your users want on your intranet? Look at ways to gather intelligence from your customers to find out what they think will be the most helpful sources and services.

• Objective analysis
What they say is one thing, what they do is another. Web analytics has been used by the marketing departments to measure how people traverse your external Web site, and those tools can help you as well. Clickthroughs and pageviews can give you the inside scoop on which services are the most popular and deserve more attention, and which are ignored and deserve more promotion.

• Bringing it all together
Marketing is about raising awareness and creating desire. Many external marketing techniques can be used to increase the use of your intranet, resulting in higher productivity and lower costs. Sterne covers a wide variety of methods you can use immediately to get the word out and increase user interaction.

Virtual Seminar Only: Member $190; Nonmember $240

Virtual Seminar Plus V-Pak: Member $250; Nonmember $300

V-Pak Only: Member $105; Nonmember $155 (The V-Pak includes an audio tape of the session, hard copy of handouts, and instructions on how to access the PowerPoint presentation on the Web.)

WSIS Addresses Information Challenges

From December 8 to 12 in Geneva, Switzerland, the United Nations hosted the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the first global UN Summit to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the information society. To prepare for the Summit, the international community embarked on a global dialogue to encourage the use of information technology to promote economic and social opportunities for all the world's inhabitants. The United States continues to do its part to ensure that the World Summit on the Information Society is a successful event. IMLS Director Robert S. Martin participated as an official U.S. delegate to WSIS in two pre-Summit conferences.

Director Martin spoke on museums' and libraries' contribution to education in the information age in a forum entitled "Role of Science in the Information Society (RSIS)." Sponsored by CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research, the world's largest particle physics center) with UNESCO and others as co-sponsors, the pre-conference on December 8 to 10 explored how the open exchange of information has revolutionized everything from global commerce to how we communicate with friends and family. Among the plenary speakers were Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web, and Ismail Serageldin, Director General of the Library of

Alexandria. To learn more about RSIS, log on to: http://rsis.web.cern.ch/rsis/01About/AboutRSIS.html.

Director Martin, as the only U.S. government representative, also spoke at UNESCO's December 9-10 pre-Summit symposium, "Building Knowledge Societies: From Vision to Action." This high-level symposium, co-sponsored by the Swiss Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM) brought together eminent political and intellectual world leaders to debate the main implications and challenges for the construction of knowledge societies. Among the panelists were noted experts such as Gary Becker, Nobel Prize winner in economics, and John Gage, Chief Researcher and Director of the Science Office of Sun Microsystems. Director Martin spoke on "Transforming Cultural Institutions in Support of the Knowledge Society." For more information about this symposium, visit http://www.unesco.org.

The United States believes that the keys to prosperity in the information society are education, individual creativity, and an environment of economic and political freedom. An environment in which citizens will have access to information is at the core of a truly inclusive information society.

To learn more about the World Summit on the Information Society, please go to http://www.itu.int/wsis.

Call for Nominations! SLA's Engineering Division Announces the 2003/2004 Elsevier Engineering Information/SLA Engineering Librarian Award

Should you be an award winner? Do you know someone who should be an award winner?

The Engineering Division Awards Committee is now accepting nominations for the 2003/2004 Elsevier Engineering Information/SLA Engineering Librarian Award. This award, offered annually to honor a member of the Engineering Division, is sponsored by Elsevier Engineering Information Inc., and highlights the accomplishments and contributions of members of the Engineering Division to the profession. Recognition comes in the form of a $1,000 stipend, a plaque, and a presentation at the annual business meeting luncheon held during the annual SLA conference. Based on criteria developed jointly with Elsevier Engineering Information, the 2004 winner will be selected by members of the Engineering Division's Awards Committee. Prospective candidates are encouraged to nominate themselves, or an associate may nominate them.

Criteria for entry are as follows: Membership in good standing for one year in the SLA Engineering Division as of January 1, 2003. Distinguished achievement in the engineering library profession, through an exceptional contribution on the job, within the SLA Engineering Division, or within the industry at large. This accomplishment should have taken place within the calendar year immediately preceding the nomination; however, in selected cases, based solely on the Award Committee's judgment, recognition may be given for an ongoing, long-term contribution.

The Elsevier Engineering Information/SLA Engineering Librarian Award Winner for 2002/2003 is Charles Wenger, Dean of Library Services, Archbishop Alemany Library, Dominican University of California. He has made a number of significant contributions to engineering librarianship in his position at the University of Utah (2001-2002), as Associate Director/Associate Dean of the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) (1997-2001), and the National Center for Atmospheric Research (1979-1985). His contributions include initiating and creating workshops for engineering faculty and students that increase library awareness. He worked closely with the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE), Educational Research and Methods Division (ERMD), and the College of Engineering to sponsor ASEE workshops at the University of Utah. Several years ago, he successfully developed a Dialog Classroom Instruction Program for science and engineering students at Idaho State University and then took it to IIT, and subsequently to the University of Utah. He has served as Chair-elect and Chair of the Materials Research and Manufacturing (MR&M) Division of SLA. During his tenure, he also acted as the MR&M Strategic Planner, Fund Raiser, and Program Chair.

All applications for the 2003/2004 Elsevier Engineering Information/SLA Engineering Librarian Award must

include: full name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address for the nominator and nominee and a concise letter, maximum of two pages, highlighting the unique accomplishments and contributions of the nominee.

Submit applications for the award by May 5 to Janifer T. Holt (Chair, SLA Engineering Division Award Committee), Feldberg Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH 03755. Telephone: 603-646-3066; fax: 603-646-2384;
e-mail:
janifer.t.holt@dartmouth.edu.

Call for 2004 Marion E. Sparks Award for Professional Development.

The Chemistry Division of the Special Libraries Association is sponsoring a student/new member scholarship essay competition in 2004. The award is named to honor Marion E. Sparks, a chemistry librarian at the University of Illinois from 1913 until her death in 1929. Ms. Sparks contributed a great deal to the field of chemical information; her achievements include teaching courses on chemical information and authoring and publishing what is argued to be the first book to formally address chemical literature and library instruction.

This competition is intended to encourage student members or new members of the Chemistry Division to attend the annual meeting and participate in the activities of the Chemistry Division of the Special Libraries Association.

AWARD: The winner will receive $1,500 to attend the 2004 SLA Annual Conference, Nashville, June 5-10. The winner will also receive a certificate of achievement and will be introduced at the Chemistry Division Business Meeting and Breakfast. This award is intended to reimburse the winner's expenses for attending the convention, including registration, airfare, lodging, food, and/or the continuing education course (registration in the course "Chemistry Resources for Non-chemists" if offered in 2004 or any other continuing education course is recommended but not required).

Criteria and application information are available online at http://www.sla.org/division/dche/sparks.html.

SLA Launches Redesigned Website

In January, SLA's new website debuted. The new site features a cleaner, more modern appearance, with functional design and structure and enhanced user-friendly access. A diverse group of Association members and staff played a key role in the development of the website. In addition to working with a Web design firm, SLA members and staff participated in surveys and focus groups, which provided valuable feedback to the Association's Web revision team.

The new site at www.sla.org features improved access to all major resources. The enhancements have been facilitated by developing a taxonomy, thesaurus, and new content management system and by reorganizing the content within redesigned navigation tools.

SLA launched its inaugural website in May 1996. The home page was redesigned in early 1997. In June of the same year, the American Society of Association Executives selected www.sla.org as a "World-Class Web Site." In October 2000, SLA redesigned the site in response to member needs.

"The foundation for developing the new website emerged from a growing demand for simplicity and improved organization of content," remarked SLA Executive Director Janice R. Lachance. "The new site accommodates the needs of SLA members and promotes the Association's stronger online presence."

For more information on SLA's new Web site, please contact Jeff Leach at 202-939-3634 or e-mail jeff@sla.org.

Update on the New ERIC

In January 2004, the U.S. Department of Education began to implement a reengineering plan for the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). The new ERIC mission continues the core function of providing a centralized bibliographic database of journal articles and other published and unpublished education materials. It enhances the database by adding free full text and electronic links to commercial sources and by making it easy to use and up-to-date. Beginning in January and until the new ERIC model for acquiring education literature is developed later in 2004, no new materials will be received or accepted for the database. However, the ERIC database will continue to grow, as thousands of documents selected by ERIC clearinghouses throughout 2003 will be added. When the new model is ready later in 2004, the new ERIC contractor will communicate with publishers, education organizations, and other database contributors to add publications and materials released from January 2004 forward.

Please see http://www.eric.ed.gov to stay up-to-date on the ERIC transition to a new contractor and model.

Toll-free contact for general questions about ERIC: (800) LET-ERIC (538-3742).

IFLA Report from the Government Libraries Section

By Jerry W. Mansfield

(Note: this report was inadvertently omitted from the IFLA reports included in the December 2003 issue of Information Outlook.)

What a busy, exciting, and hot conference we enjoyed in Berlin! Outside of our Section business meetings where we planned for next year's conference and worked on our strategic plan for 2004-2005, we were involved in our many programs. The first of these was an all-day privileged event spent at the offices of Gerhard Schroeder, Chancellor of Germany, and Schloss Bellevue, home of Johannes Rau, President of Germany. It was an honor to meet at these two sites, as these buildings are closed to the public and most of the citizenry who are not on official business. We learned about the much-anticipated portal for all

German ministry libraries that will be available in 2004. Presently, the head of each ministry library and that of the chancellory meet monthly to share information and work on common issues. Once the portal becomes operative, all ministry libraries will be able to access each other's online collections, databases, and staff.

The Government Libraries Section also held a workshop offsite at the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs. The subject was "German Government Libraries Since Reunification – Experiences and Perspectives." We began the day at the Ministry of Interior, where we learned about the models of library organization since the Bonn-Berlin Resolution of 1991. Two Ministry of Interior librarians spoke about their specific experiences in moving a ministry library (people and materials) to the new capital of Germany. They viewed it as an opportunity to start anew and create a futuristic state-of-the-art library and associated services. In the afternoon we moved to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where we heard about and experienced its new library model. The reunification of the Germanys also created new ministries, and we heard from the librarian of the Ministry of Science, Research and Art on the task of starting from scratch in a new ministerial environment. At each ministry we had tours of the library; at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs we actually saw the original treaty for the reunification of the two Germanys on display.

Continuing the change and reunification theme, our open paper session was titled "Changing Governments, Changing Libraries." We had four diverse papers with presenters from Kenya, Mali, the United States, and Bulgaria.

On a final note, yours truly was elected chair of the Government Libraries Section for a two-year term.

SLA Seeks Nominations for Depository Library Council

The U.S. Government Printing Office is seeking nominations for open positions on the U.S. Depository Library Council. The Council consists of 15 representatives of the U.S. Government information community, each serving a term of 3 years. The term officially begins on October 1, 2004, and runs until September 30, 2007. Each year, the Public Printer appoints five new council members. The Council meets twice yearly: in April at various sites around the US, and in October in Washington, DC. The Council pays the travel and per diem expenses of Council members.

The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) is seeking individuals who have a broad working knowledge of Federal information dissemination policy and issues and the ability to relate that knowledge to the FDLP. It is anticipated the coming year will focus on the FDLP in the electronic age, including questions on ensuring permanent public access and authenticity of Government online information. Council members should have an understanding of the information-based society and economy, including issues such as technology developments, literacy, productivity, national competitiveness and the roles of the various sectors of society in addressing such issues.

Nominations are due to SLA by February 23, 2003. If you would like to submit a nomination, contact Doug Newcomb at Doug@sla.org or by calling 1-202-939-3676.

SLA Housing? What's Complicated About Getting a Hotel Room?

By Alicia Cronin Dimaio

Alicia is the director of SLA Events. She can be reached at alicia@sla.org.

Hotel rooms for the SLA annual conference have always been a hot topic: Why are they so expensive when there is a cheaper hotel down the street? Why can't SLA get better rates, and why can I get a better rate on the Internet?

Although arranging conference hotel reservations may seem simple, it is actually a complicated web of decisions and circumstances that affect each other greatly. Here are a few questions and answers to help sort it out:

1. How are official hotels chosen?

In many cases, it is the hotel that chooses SLA. When SLA is searching for a new location for the annual conference in a potential city, the city's convention and visitors bureau sends out a bid to all the hotels in the area, stating the dates we are arriving and departing and the predicted attendance. The hotels then offer a certain number of rooms (depending on what is going on in the hotel at the same time) and an estimated range of rates they would offer SLA attendees. Some hotels may not offer us rooms. This usually is because a conflicting event has been contracted in the hotel, or the hotel does not feel the group is compatible with its usual guest base.

Once hotels have put in a bid to SLA, staff goes and visits the hotels–looking at factors such as distance to the convention center, amenities, safety, cleanliness, brand reputation, and affordability of potential rates. Contracts are then negotiated with each hotel.

2. How are rates decided?

A rate base (the lowest rate in current-year terms the hotel is willing to give) is decided during contract negotiations. As the rate is only a base, most of the time the hotels will insist on adding an increase clause, stating that they have the right to raise the rate by X percent each year until the date of the conference, in order to cover any change in price climate. The rate base is a combination of factors: how many rooms the hotel is holding, whether we need to reserve meeting space, how much we would spend on

food and beverages in the hotel, where the hotel is located (close location to the convention center always equals higher rate!), and what amenities it provides. These factors are calculated to come up with a suggested rate base that would cover the hotel's in-house expenses and create profit. (Whether we like it or not, hotels are out to make a profit!) SLA will negotiate with the hotel to come to a compromise on that base rate.

3. Why can I get a cheaper rate on the Internet than SLA can provide?

In the meetings industry, this is the number one controversy. Meeting planners claim that putting lower rates on the Internet is unfair (because when attendees reserve the discounted Internet rooms, the group doesn't get credit for the reservation), while the hotels argue if they have extra rooms that need to be filled, they should have a right to sell them at any price they want. When travel websites first became popular, many hotels signed contracts with the sites promising to sell a certain amount of their inventory on the sites at a discounted rate, regardless of the rate promised to SLA or other groups. As time goes by, most of the hotel chains are realizing this practice is bad for the meetings business, for it hurts them in the long run. Current trends show hotels limiting their inventory on travel sites to very small numbers. Therefore, when you see a discounted rate on the Internet, most likely only five to 10 rooms are being offered at this price.

4. Why have SLA's conference hotel rates been so high and so limited in the past few years?

The past few years have been very challenging for SLA in this area. As mentioned before, the conference rate and the number of rooms reserved for SLA are negotiated through the contract. For the past few years, SLA has been forced to work with high rate structures, yearly increases, and a dramatically overestimated number of reserved hotel rooms in hotel contracts that were negotiated and signed by former SLA staff members approximately seven to 10 years ago. These factors are affected as well by attrition clauses, which commit SLA to paying a large sum of damages if we do not fill up the number of rooms originally promised. While years ago many of these factors could be negotiated out, the climate in the industry has changed so that hotels rely on these rate increases and penalties to make up for any revenue loss (when SLA has fewer attendees stay in the hotel) that was anticipated 10 years ago.

SLA has worked hard to negotiate with the hotels about these troublesome contracts. While the hotels recognize our situation, many believe they were not given realistic projections because SLA had significantly overestimated our room blocks at the time of the contract. This means that many properties were not willing to cut back the SLA room block to the levels needed–they felt that would cause them to lose too much revenue. Since the hotels had signed contracts, they did not need to compromise. Therefore, while SLA recognized the need for lower rates and more diverse properties, these surmounting penalties prevented us from moving forward with other hotels–in the hope that concentrating the number properties would help fill the overestimated blocks as much as possible.

5. Why does SLA need to have room blocks anyway? Why can't attendees just book their own hotel room?

When SLA chooses a new destination for a conference, we begin working with that city's convention and visitors bureau to come up with a rental agreement at a convention center. Most convention centers are run by city government, which uses the convention center in conjunction with city hotels to bring in as many tourism dollars as possible. Therefore, the rental agreement for the center is tied in very closely with how many hotel room nights (called a room block) a group is willing to guarantee. If a group is not willing to guarantee that a certain number of people will stay in their hotels, many cities will not be willing to work with the group on a reasonable rental fee for the center. Without a guarantee of hotel rooms, the convention center can either choose not to work with a group at all or charge fees too high for the group to to afford.

Please help us fight our current housing challenges by booking through the SLA Conference Housing Bureau. Attrition penalties are crippling, and if they are not brought under control, they will affect conference attendee costs. For example, a $200,000 penalty would translate into $17 per member or $75 per full-paying conference attendee! By fending off these attrition charges, SLA will be able to keep down the costs of our other products and services that benefit you. We hope this gives you some insight into the complicated world of conference hotel reservations. SLA continues to be committed to getting the best rooms and rates available for conference attendees, and is dedicated to improving the housing selection process in future years.

information trends

eBooks: Rumors of Our Death Are Greatly Exaggerated

By Stephen Abram

If eBooks are so unsuccessful, why are there so many of them? Maybe they're actually quite different than we expected them to be . . .

Some Recent News Headlines:
Barnes & Noble to discontinue e-books
Bubble Bursts for e-Books
Google to contain OCLC holdings records?
Amazon lets you search inside the book!
Amazon's Book Search Hits a Snag
Wikipedia: A Good Thing?
Trends show it's too early to close the book on digital text

There's a big difference between the public's view of eBooks (novels and popular literature) and the librarian's stock in trade (reference books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, directories and IT/computer technical reference eBooks. eBook formats add a great deal of value to reference materials, especially the kinds of books (programming manuals, AACR2 and the like) that only the deepest information geeks read cover to cover from their nightstand and those in which normal folk prefer to just find that useful paragraph or page.

Part of the eBook image problem was that horrid and stupid tangential path that was explored on the road through dedicated devices. It might have been a necessary developmental path, but it was never going to fly. While everything else is converging in Palms, PCs and phones, why would anyone want another device? In some places I see folks wearing the equivalent of a carpenter's tool belt to manage their devices. It's a hoot! It will make more sense when we have better global and open standards and seamless device-aware delivery. Until then, library and intranet eBook collections are a useful place for communities and businesses to get access–especially when they are integrated into OPACs and offer decent remote access to the whole community at the point of need.

eTextbooks seem to hold a little value too. Lord knows I wish I could lighten my kids' 40+-pound backpacks. For now we just buy an extra copy of the kids' main textbooks, but that's certainly not an option for every parent. Often eTextbooks are bigger and have more features than the print copy. I see that some medical and dental schools have gone whole hog for this one.

I've also found a personal use for places like Project Gutenberg's and netLibrary's classic eBooks. For essays and the like, it's a lot easier to find that biblical or Shakespearean (I'm poorly educated enough that I sometimes mix them up–grin) quote in an eBook database. It's still just reference and not reading, though! I have also shown the kids how to use an eBook to find all the symbolism in a classic–easier than reading it over and over again.

Anyway, the death of eBooks has been greatly exaggerated. I think that we're hearing the old saw that "books have to be read in the bathtub" too often. Jeezeven we hard-core library geeks don't need to be wet to read! And I think we'd prefer that our reference materials avoid that fate too.

I believe that the comparison between eBooks and print books is a silly debate. It seeks to find the one right medium rather than determining the best features of each format and allowing the market to decide. For reference books, finding the answer is far more important than the format. For recreational reading, print is far more comfortable. Comfort is a clear prerequisite for a satisfactory reading experience.

So the real question for librarians is, Where are eBooks preferable to print books, and where is print preferable? Indeed, other book formats have their place without this hand-wringing debate. Audio books are better than print books, especially when we careen down the highway. Public libraries carry copies of the same book in audio, Braille, large print, hardcover, paperback and so forth to cover a diversity of needs. Why wouldn't eBooks fit within this pantheon of formats?

I suspect that Barnes & Noble's eBook sales weren't optimal because its focus was on books that delivered entertainment and recreational reading. I also suspect its pricing didn't promote experimentation, when it so closely matched the print edition costs while offering increased barriers to success.

Are there trends in our library-type markets that mitigate in favor of eBooks? Yes.

In October 2003, OCLC and Google announced a pilot project to load OCLC WorldCat records into Google's search armor. OCLC is also the owner of netLibrary, one of the largest eBook collections. It is not a stretch to imagine the world's most popular search engine serving as the front door to so many OPACs with library location information and instant access to selected eBooks directly from the traditional catalog record.

In October 2003, Amazon announced the ability to search inside the book directly from the Amazon site. This feature covered over 120,000 books, 33 million pages. Although rights management concerns put a pretty quick kibosh on the initiative, it is still easy to see how valuable this feature could be. I'll bet it is a feature of many of our next-generation OPACs and will reappear, quickly since Google is also working on a similar project for early 2004.

In 2004 Micromedia ProQuest will launch the next generation of its eDirectories, where all directories published by MMPQ, including the *Canadian Almanac & Directory* (a leading Canadian directory since 1847), will be cross searchable and offer advanced features such as mailing list generation and marked records.

Since January 2001, *Wikipedia* (http://www.wikipedia.org) has been providing a home for one of the first open-source content projects–an online encyclopedia. This amazing encyclopedia, created and edited collaboratively by users, now has more than 168,078 articles in the English version. Few people have not used or tripped over online and CD encyclopedias such as *Britannica*, *Grolier* or Microsoft *Encarta*. These encyclopedias are clearly an easier reference tool for the Web literate than the print versions, and the occasional moving image or sound bite provides a tantalizing view of their potential.

In 2003, major expansions to the world of access to technical eBooks took place. ProQuest Safari and Books 24x7 provide the majority of the best-selling IT and programming text reference books in eBook format. Special subset collections of office-oriented systems reference books (PowerPoint, Excel, eMail, etc.) can deliver help directly to the desktop over an organization's intranet. Books 24x7's BusinessPro collection offers basic management text to help desktop users access the basics of planning human resources and other management techniques. The integration of Books 24x7 into SkillSoft, one of the leading eLearning management systems for IT pros, shows how far along this eBook format is coming (http://www.micromedia.ca/CIRC/Bks24x7.htm or http://www.il.proquest.com/products/pd-product-safari.shtml).

If you're interested in looking into the wealth of eBooks on the Web, check out Digital Book Index, which is already a very extensive catalog of full-text monographs that have been put online by one or another website scattered over the Internet-over 80,000 so far (http://www.digitalbookindex.com/search001a.htm).

Several archival eBook collections are available for outright purchase and perpetual access. Such collections as Early English Books Online (EEBO) and Gerritsen's quality collection for women's studies can be acquired to support the curriculum and research needs of an institution indefinitely (http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/ or http://wwwlib.umi.com/eebo/).

Specialized collections also exist. One of the best known is Knovel. Knovel, which is trying to provide a one-stop source for finding answers to science and engineering questions, integrates eBooks and databases into one solution.

So, librarians will be making a different choice than consumers. We focus on ensuring good collections, special access and quality information and strive less for the entertainment value of a good read in the bathtub. What are the issues that affect our choices? Here are a few of the things that concern us:

The Good:
- The ability to search
- Easier hyperlinked access through the index and table of contents
- Easier hyperlinked access through footnotes and bibliographies
- Selected and updated quality collections or libraries of reference books
- Always with you, always ready, accessible remotely
- Space saving

The Not So Good:
- Inability to loan/transfer your eBooks
- Requirement for technological infrastructure
- Screens that can be difficult in terms of size and resolution
- Access devices, most of which are multipurpose, so you compete for access
- Battery life
- Device ergonomics
- Digital rights management issues that are not yet fully determined
- Subscription and business models that are still emerging

I can see a huge role now for the following types of eBooks:
1. Technical reference books that are hard to keep up-to-date and for which the reference need outweighs the need to have the book in hand-useful references such as the O'Reilly IT or MS and IBM manuals.

2. Large collections of research support materials that are rare or fragile, such as 17th-century English literature.

3. Encyclopedias that give you a quick overview and enable you to read online or print a page or two, such as *Britannica, Grolier, Groves* or *Wikipedia*.

4. eSerials that act more like books, such as certain statistical publications and other kinds of government or association annuals.

5. Directories such as *Financial Services Canada, Associations Canada,* or the *Canadian Almanac & Directory.*

These reference materials belong at the user's fingertips on the desktop. They save time in the new format by placing quality authoritative information at the point of need and avoiding time-wasting Web searches of dubious result. Please don't dismiss eBooks out of hand merely because the format is maturing and no longer trendy. This is exactly when they can show their mettle.

This column contains the personal perspectives of Stephen Abram, a long time commentator on and prognosticator about the library world. Stephen would love to hear from you at stephen.abram@sympatico.ca.

Let Your Voice Be Heard!!

2004 SLA Spring Election

It's time to vote for your 2004/05 SLA Board of Directors

Janice R. Lachance
SLA Executive Director

The Association's annual election is upon us! Chart the future of SLA by choosing your association's leaders. As members of SLA, you are privileged but also free to select leaders who identify with you on the important challenges facing the Association. Your vote is important because it reflects your voice on the future of your profession. As the old saying goes, "Silence equals acceptance."

VOTE

VOTE

Ethel Salonen
SLA President-Elect

I strongly recommend that every SLA member view the annual election as an opportunity to make a difference in the profession. The SLA Nominating Committee has the crucial charge of identifying and placing before us qualified members of our Association who will lead us into the future. Serving as a leader for the Association and the profession, is an honor and a privilege. I encourage each of you to vote and help build the future of our Association and information leaders.

Nettie Seaberry
SLA Member

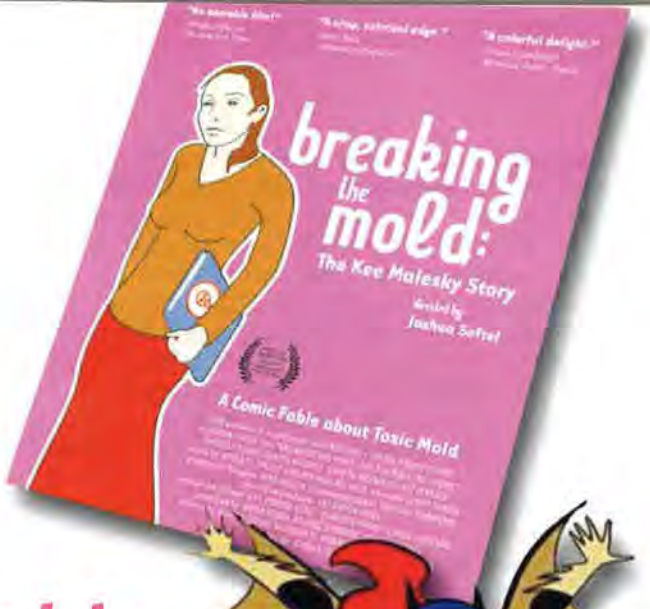
I have always believed that the Association is a representation of its constituents. When we see our peers stepping to the forefront to initiate and effect change, we should be willing to support them. The Association provides a mechanism for that support, and we should make every effort to utilize that opportunity.

VOTE

Special Librar
Association

Membership will receive ballots the first week of February and they must be returned by Monday, March 8, 2004.

For complete details and information on the candidates visit www.sla.org/springelecti



Breaking the Mold:

Information Professionals as Action Figures and Reality Show Characters. What's Next...a Nude Librarian Calendar? Yes!

By Elyse Kroll

Elyse Kroll is a co-author of Dreaming for Two: The Hidden Emotional Life of Expectant Mothers *(Plume, 2003.) She can be reached at elysekroll2000@yahoo.com*

The Hottest Job Around

Corporate Librarian is a Hot Job for 2003/2004. But that's not all. From music to movies, from action figures to nude calendars, information professionals are tweaking their image and getting a lot of attention– and in the most surprising places.

A few years ago in New York City, on a disturbingly warm December evening, a group of moviegoers tried to conjure up the Christmas spirit by attending a public screening of *It's a Wonderful Life*, Frank Capra's perennial holiday classic. While it is decidedly a period piece at this point, it has managed to remain relevant, and in many ways still feels fresh. That is, with one memorable exception-the infamous library scene.

You probably remember it: Clarence the angel offers suicidally dejected George Bailey a glimpse of how much worse off the world would be had he never been born, culminating with the horrifying revelation that if not for George, Mary Hatch would have wound up not just an old maid, but-horror of horrors–a librarian to boot! This moment triggered a huge laugh from the audience, a laugh that was probably not intended when the film was made in 1946. Unlike so much of the film, the stereotype of the old-maid librarian clearly had not withstood the test of time.

If anything, the image of the librarian has been revamped and modernized over the past few decades, as has the job itself. Once considered one of the few professions suitable for women, along with teaching and nursing, corporate librarianship is now one of the

hottest jobs around. In a widely reported study conducted by the outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc., the position of Corporate Librarian is named one of the top three hot jobs for 2004, with an average salary of $60,000 to $65,000 per year (http://money.cnn.com/2003/08/28/pf/saving/hotjobsnow/index.htm). The study concluded that the demand for employees with library science degrees extends far beyond the corporate sector; government agencies, law firms, advertising agencies, museums, medical centers, research laboratories, and professional associations are all clamoring for librarians. And there's nothing hotter than being in demand.

SLA Executive Director Janice R. Lachance remarked, "In every sector of the economy, the powers that be recognize the value that information professionals bring to their organizations. The myriad of top-notch professional development and networking opportunities that SLA offers have a direct connection to that value. The Challenger, Gray & Christmas findings are significant because they confirm that the expertise of corporate librarians is in very high demand."

The past several decades have provided memorable depictions of librarians in the media, but recently, librarians seem to be everywhere–they're in the news, in film, in music, and even in toy stores.

The study also supports findings by the Special Libraries Association. Data in SLA's 2003 Salary Survey (released October 2003) confirm that the average SLA member's salary is $61,522 (average in Canada $61,959 CDN), with the highest average salaries in New England at $66,179. (The highest average in Canada was Ontario, at $63,449 CDN.) Furthermore, a study conducted by SLA in 1999 revealed that 85 percent of companies ranked in the top 100 of the Fortune 500 list had libraries and information centers, compared to 50 percent of the companies ranked in the bottom 100.

In December, a Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc., report projected that even with the outsourcing of many jobs to different countries, there will be a lot of U.S. jobs opening up from 2000 to 2010. In fact, they are projecting 111,000 job openings for corporate librarians in that period.

"For years, we have promoted the fact that information professionals play a pivotal role in gathering, organizing and coordinating access to the best available information sources for their organizations. Global organizations are realizing that there is a critical need for turning external information and internal intellectual capital into reliable and accessible knowledge, which in turn contributes directly to the organization's on-going learning, decisionmaking, and most importantly, bottom line revenue. This creation of usable knowledge can only be achieved by hiring qualified information professionals," remarked SLA President Cynthia V. Hill.

From Old Maids to Superheroes

Nearly 60 years ago, Capra's portrait of Mary Hatch as a brittle, bespectacled old maid was probably taken seriously; a cautionary tale of what can become of a young woman who chooses to spend her time among books rather than in pursuit of a husband. Fast-forward 20 years to the introduction of DC Comics' Barbara Gordon and her alter ego, Batgirl. Barbara earns her paycheck as Gotham City's head librarian, but when crime strikes, she lets her hair down, trades her twinset and pearls for a skin-tight unitard and thigh-high stiletto boots, and kicks arch-villain butt. Even without her alter-ego Batgirl, Barbara Gordon is no shrinking violet. She's an independent career woman who has a photographic memory (something even Batman doesn't possess!), a brown belt in judo, and her own motorcycle. Barbara Gordon is a superhero with or without the mask and cape, and while she may not be the most realistic representation of librarians that the media has to offer, she's certainly the most multifaceted.

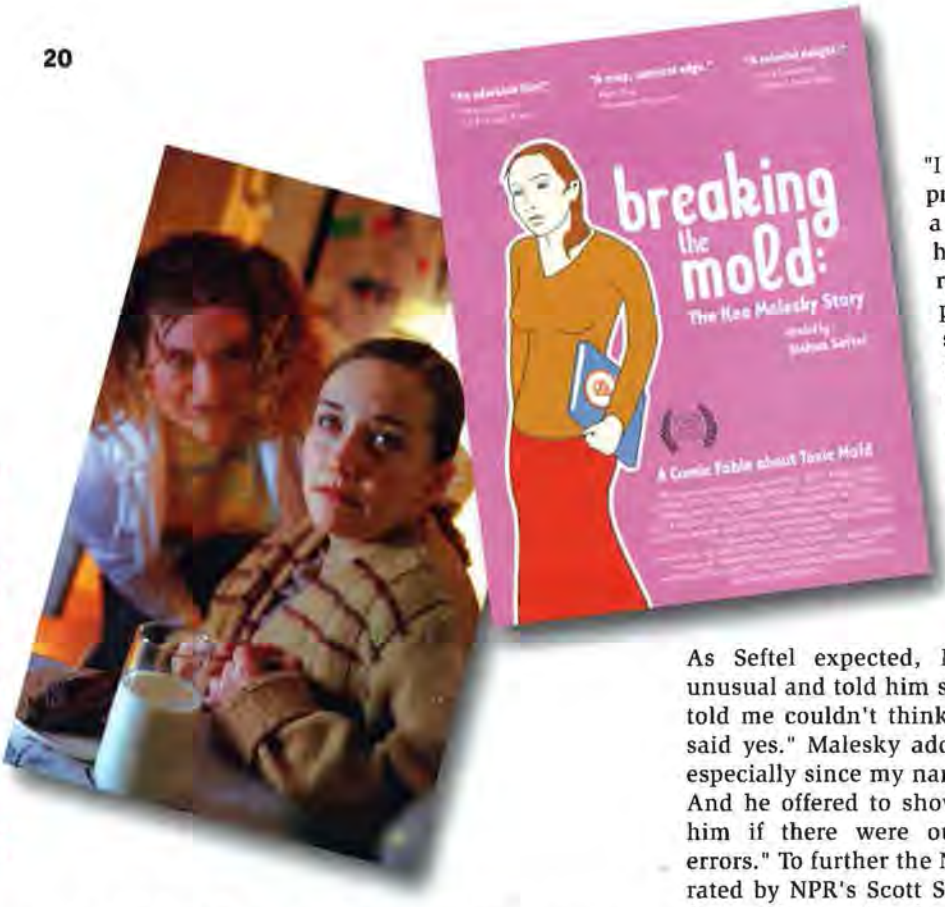
The past several decades have provided memorable depictions of librarians in the media, but recently, librarians seem to be everywhere–they're in the news, in film, in music, and even in toy stores.

Librarians as Recording Stars?

Librarians have also recently made it onto the record charts. Tori Amos' new album is called *Tales of a Librarian*, a title that, she explained in a recent live MSN Web chat, refers to the fact that she sees herself as a librarian, and her songs as the tales, or books, with which she is entrusted. "I've always said the songs are alive and I'm really a librarian," Amos explains. "These are books that come to me in sonic form.... " For the album cover, Amos has chosen a beguiling image casting herself as the librarian in the title; she is seated in a dark leather wingback chair, which could belong in a library or reading room, albeit a very tastefully appointed one. Her gaze is direct and her clothing is strictly 1940s femme fatale. The overall effect is of intelligence and strength equaling sexiness. Nothing about the image plays to the old librarian stereotype.

Breaking the Mold-Librarians as Reality TV Heroes

One of the most amusing current entries in the librarian image catalogue is a short film called *Breaking the Mold: The Kee Malesky Story*, an ironic take on the after-school special, featuring an aspiring librarian as its heroine. Two years ago, Maryland Public Television (MPT) approached filmmaker Joshua Seftel about



making a short fiction film. Seftel, 35, an international award-winning documentary filmmaker since the age of 22, had always wanted try his hand at narrative fiction. MPT offered Seftel the entire budget and complete creative freedom. There was just one catch–the film had to teach middle school children about indoor air quality, hardly the most cinematic of topics. "For months, I struggled to find a way to accomplish this," says Seftel. "As I read about indoor air quality, one subject that came up time and again was toxic mold. I found articles from all over the country about families that had suffered the effects of mold growing in their homes."

So how did the idea for a film about toxic mold wind up becoming a satire of pop culture with a heroine named after a famous librarian? Seftel found his inspiration for how to handle this unlikely topic in an even unlikelier place. "When I sat down to write *Breaking the Mold*, the reality television boom was just setting in," explains Seftel. "So I thought, why not set a toxic mold story in a reality house and turn it into a comedy that comments on the state of popular culture?" Seftel envisioned the film as illustrating the opposition between popular culture and what's deeper and more profound in our culture. If toxic mold serves as an apt metaphor for the former, Seftel saw the library as the perfect symbol for the latter. "The library has an appealing sense of order and safety," he explains. "It's the last bastion of where ideas and culture are kept, something that's not being well-maintained in the world around us."

"The library has an appealing sense of order and safety. It's the last bastion of where ideas and culture are kept, something that's not being well-maintained in the world around us."

"I had this idea of a librarian as the protagonist," he adds, "specifically, a young, unfulfilled librarian who hasn't realized her dream and who reluctantly winds up on a reality program." At the suggestion of his sister, a librarian, Seftel contacted SLA member Kee Malesky, the reference librarian at National Public Radio (http://www.npr.org/about/people/bios/kmalesky.html) and one of the best known librarians in the country, with a strange request–would she allow him to name his central character after her?

As Seftel expected, Malesky thought the request unusual and told him she'd have to think it over. "She told me couldn't think of a reason to say no, so she said yes." Malesky adds, "I thought it would be fun, especially since my name is out there because of NPR. And he offered to show me the script so I could tell him if there were outstandingly egregious library errors." To further the NPR connection, the film is narrated by NPR's Scott Simon, and very observant NPR fans will recognize the theme to *All Things Considered* playing in the background.

The 27-minute-long film is the offbeat story of (a completely fictional) Kee Malesky, who by age seven had already won a nationwide library research contest and was on her way to developing a new, more efficient method for cataloguing library books that would replace the Dewey Decimal System. But when Kee's brother, Mo, emerged as a pee-wee hockey star, Kee quickly slipped into his shadow. Before long, Kee had stopped going to the library altogether.

Ten years later, Kee (Danielle Percy) is in a deep funk, spending most of her time cataloguing her teen magazine collection and helping her mother polish Mo's trophies. It takes the guidance of her friend, Shelly Kugelman (Zabeth Russel), an appearance on a popular reality show, and a severe mold-induced asthma attack to finally get Kee back on track.

Seftel has succeeded in creating a deft satire of our current popular culture, skewering the reality show craze and the disposable celebrities it produces, and the film has been appearing at festivals around the country and will air on public television stations this spring. As for the real Kee Malesky's thoughts about the finished film and her fictional namesake, she has this to say: "The film pokes fun at library work, but in a good-spirited, respectful way. Yes, the character of Kee is mousy and underappreciated by

everyone around her, including her family, but there is a strength of character beneath that. She does what she thinks is important and gets a great deal of satisfaction from it. It leaves you with a positive feeling about libraries and research." As for Seftel, he hopes that this successful first foray into narrative fiction will help pave his way to eventually direct feature films. But for the time being, he hopes this film "will make you laugh, make you cry, and teach you something about toxic mold."

Librarians as Action Figures

Perhaps nothing has caused more uproar among librarians and information specialists than the debut of the Librarian Action Figure, complete with push-button "shushing action." "The shushing thing just put me right over the edge," Diane DuBois, library director of Caribou Public Library in Caribou, Maine, told CNN.com. "We're so not like that anymore. It's so stereotypical I could scream."

The Archie McPhee company created the 5-inch figure wearing frumpy clothes, spectacles, and sensible shoes. She is, however, modeled after Nancy Pearl, a Seattle-based librarian who can be considered heroic in her efforts to share her love of reading and to promote literacy. She created "If All of Seattle Read the Same Book," a reading project that spread nationwide. She is also the author of *Book Lust: Recommended Reading for Every Mood, Moment and Reason.*

In a Seattle Times article, Pearl was quoted as saying the shushing motion would determine "which librarians have a sense of humor." Regardless of how anyone took it, the doll received a lot of press. When was the last time so much was heard about librarians?

Anyone who has seen the real Nancy Pearl admits that the doll is a faithful representation of her appearance. "I liked the idea of the action figure," says Kee Malesky, "but then I saw it and thought it's the same old thing; sensible shoes, pencil in the hair, and shushing–I've never shushed anyone. But then you see Nancy Pearl," Malesky confesses, "and she really does look like that. So I have mixed feelings because it while it may seem stereotypical, you can't say it's not true." Pearl summed it up best when she told the Seattle Times that "the role of a librarian is to make sense of the world of information. If that's not a qualification for superhero-dom, what is?"

Nude Librarian Calendar

One of the most titillating recent appearances of librarians not only sidesteps superhero costumes and sensible shoes-it does away with clothing altogether. Librarians have now posed nude for a charity calendar. According to a report in the *Telegraph News* in the United Kingdom, librarians from the London borough of Camden have broken the long-running myth of librarians as being prim and proper. The *Telegraph* reported:

> The volunteers, aged between 37 and 60, said that they were determined to challenge the stereotype of the dull librarian. Miss October, Diane Bowman, 42, a senior librarian, said: "Some colleagues didn't need much persuading, while others needed their arms twisting a little bit."

The *Camden New Journal* also reported on the calendar–and you can visit its site to get an eyeful–or two eyes full! (http://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/f111203_1.htm). Not to worry–although the librarians have posed nude, the photos are strictly G-rated. All body parts racier than a bare shoulder are tastefully concealed behind publications.

Past images of librarians in the media vacillated between that of the strict, bun-wearing old maid and that of the repressed librarian with an alter ego longing to emerge, be it a sexpot, a superhero, or both. But the most recent images of librarians seem to celebrate them for exactly who they are and what they do, no transformation required. Some may bear a surface resemblance to the old stereotypes, and some may flout it, but closer inspection reveals many layers and a common core of respect for the profession. Perhaps it has to do with librarians emerging as the staunchest defenders of the First Amendment in their recent showdown with Attorney General John Ashcroft and the Patriot Act. Perhaps it's because of the increasing importance of information specialists in the Information Age. Perhaps it's simply that the profession is at long last getting its due.

copyright corner

Anticircumvention Ruling

By Laura Gasaway

The anticircumvention provisions of the Copyright Act contain a requirement that the Librarian of Congress conduct a triennial rule-making proceeding to determine whether the implementation of access controls reduces the ability of individuals to use the copyrighted works in lawful ways. The statute requires the Librarian of Congress to consult with the Register of Copyrights and the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce in order to determine "whether persons who are users of a copyrighted work are, or are likely to be in the succeeding 3-year period, adversely affected by the prohibition ... in their ability to make noninfringing uses ... of a particular class of copyrighted work." Considerations were to include the availability of copyrighted works for use; the availability for use for nonprofit archival, preservation and educational purposes; and the impact that circumvention technologies will have on fair use and on the market value of such works.[1] This regular rule-making was considered a "fail-safe" mechanism that would monitor marketplace developments for copyrighted works and would permit the waiving of the anticircumvention prohibition for limited times, if necessary, in order to prevent a diminishment in the ability of individual users to use a particular category of work.

The first of these rule-makings was held in 2000 and was the subject of an earlier column. The second, concluded in October 2003, resulted in the addition of two more classes of works to the list. The 2000 proceeding exempted two classes of works from the anticircumvention provision. (1) "Compilations consisting of lists of websites blocked by filtering software applications, and (2) Literary works, including computer programs and databases, protected by access control mechanisms that fail to permit access because of malfunction, damage or obsoleteness."

The 2003 rule-making proceeding was conducted like the first, with written testimony, hearings, and reply testimony. Library associations once again hoped that the result of the rule-making would exempt broad classes for which fair uses could be made, but again the announced classes are quite narrow. Moreover, the same burden of proof was required: a showing by a preponderance of the evidence that there either has been or is likely to be a substantial adverse effect on noninfringing uses by users of copyrighted works. Each triennium, evidence must be presented anew to continue the exemption of a class of works. According to the Librarian of Congress, the "particular class of works" to be exempted must be judged on the attributes of the works themselves.

The 2000 categories were continued but have been amended somewhat. The first category is now defined as "compilations consisting of lists of Internet locations blocked by commercially marketed filtering software applications that are intended to prevent access to domains, websites or portions of websites."[2] This category does not include lists of Internet locations blocked by software that operates exclusively to protect against damage to computers or networks, firewalls or spam. The class does not prevent access by persons wishing to review, comment on or criticize this software as a matter of public interest.

The second class consists of "computer programs protected by dongles that prevent access due to malfunction or damage and which are obsolete." This represents a limitation of the second category from 2000 to cover only hardware locks that control access to a program. If the dongle is damaged or malfunctions so that an authorized user of the software cannot gain access to the software, the exemption applies. This is similar to the section 108(c) exemption that permits libraries to reproduce a work for which the equipment for viewing or hearing the work has become obsolete. "This exemption emphasizes

the adverse effects on noninfringing uses by users of the software."[3]

The third category is entirely new: "computer programs and video games distributed in formats that have become obsolete which require the original media or hardware as a condition of access." This category was proposed by the Internet Archive, which stated that sometimes works distributed originally in digital form on physical media such as a floppy disk were accompanied by "original only" access controls that allowed copies to be made but prevented those copies from running. The problem is exacerbated when the physical format in which the work was distributed has become obsolete. Libraries are already permitted to copy such obsolete works under section 108(c). The definition of *obsolete* is found in the same section: "A format shall be considered obsolete if the machine or system necessary to render perceptible a work stored in that format is no longer manufactured or is no longer reasonably available in the commercial marketplace." This class is thus limited to software and video games distributed in now obsolete formats.

The fourth category is based on a recommendation by the American Foundation for the Blind and five major library associations. It consists of literary works distributed in eBook format when all existing eBook editions contain access controls that prevent the enabling of either the eBook's read-aloud function or a screen reader to convert the text into a specialized format such as Braille. This category offers accessibility to the blind and visually impaired that is otherwise not available from a print version. By using digital rights management tools that incorporate access controls, publishers of eBooks may prevent access by visually impaired individuals. A publisher may avoid subjecting its works to this exemption by simply ensuring that each of its works in eBook form also has an edition that is accessible to the blind and visually impaired in either read-aloud or screen reader format.

While the new exemptions are quite useful although narrow, library associations hoped for the approval of exemptions that would permit users of digital works, computer databases and software to make fair use of these works. These exemptions go part way, but not all the way. In 2006, library associations will again have the opportunity to present proof to the Librarian of Congress that additional classes of works should be exempted from the anticircumvention provisions.

[1] See 17 U.S.C. & 1201(1)(C)(2000)

[2] 37 CFR & 201, final rule (2003)

[3] Id.

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The Business of Search Engines[1]

Understanding how Web advertising, partnerships, and the race for market dominance affect search tools and search results

By Rita Vine

Rita Vine is a professional librarian and co-founder of Workingfaster.com (http://www.workingfaster.com), which helps professionals break through the clutter of the Internet and access information that matters. Her article "Real People Don't Do Boolean: How to Teach End Users to Find High-Quality Information on the Internet" appeared in the March 2001 issue of Information Outlook. Rita teaches Web searching to clients across North America and serves on the selection team of the Search Portfolio (http://www.searchportfolio.com), an enterprise product of the 100 top starting points for searching the free Web. A "lite" version of the Search Portfolio, with links to about 10 percent of its resources, is available at http://www.searchportfolio.com/searchlite.html.

Introduction

Now more than ever, users rely on the Internet for information and news. With well over 8 million distinct websites[2] and billions of individual Web pages, finding high-quality information is increasingly challenging. Providers of information and services know that their website is a key component of their business and that, in a crowded information marketplace, searchers must be able to find it using search engines.

Search engine advertising has grown tremendously in the past two years, and prospects for continued growth are strong.[3] Information providers and marketers know that Web users seek information on the Web prior to making a major purchase or information decision,[4] and that users rely heavily on commercial search engines for most of their searches.

Why Is Search So Hot?

Web search now represents a significant portion of Web activity. Google searches average 250 million searches per day, and the total daily number of Web searches is estimated at well over 600 million.[5]

At least a portion of searching is for products or services that the searcher will eventually purchase. Research has shown that higher-income users spend more time on the Internet and buy more online.[6] This marketplace of high-income earners is intensely attractive to marketers and much harder to isolate in traditional media such as TV or magazines.

Technological advances have enabled advertisers to track the success of their Web-based ad placements. The availability of this technology–along with specialized ad-buy-

ing programs where payment is made only if a link is clicked–has enabled advertisers to ensure greater return on investment of their Internet ad purchases in ways not offered by traditional media.

Research has shown that brand advertising works on the Web.[7] Initially it was used as an alternative advertising medium by a few early adopters who placed banner ads on search engine pages. Now many more advertisers, including many small businesses, have embarked on advertising purchases after several major players-and probably their competitors–adopted the medium as a main marketing stream.

Advertisers know that they fare better with search engine ads than without them. In a survey conducted during fall 2003 with 20 online advertisers, half said that paid advertising in search engine results listings made visible, sometimes critical differences to their traffic.[8] In the advertising industry, where return on investment is often elusive, that kind of claim can make companies race to bid for search engine keywords.

What Business Are Search Engines In?

Searchers believe that search engines are in the search business. They count on free, commercial search tools to help them find the relevant information they want quickly and easily, regardless of type of question, complexity, or language. Search engine companies focus their own marketing initiatives heavily on perpetuating this idea among searchers, asserting that they deliver the most relevant or comprehensive information and ensuring that the searcher returns to conduct additional searches.[9]

In reality, commercial search engines are in the advertising business. They earn the vast majority of their revenue by delivering context-sensitive advertising using a variety of means, but principally by leasing search keywords to purchasers. Virtually all commercial search engines (Google, Alltheweb, AltaVista, Teoma, MSN, Lycos, and WiseNut–Gigablast is the current exception) and major portals (About.com, Yahoo!) rely on this model for most of their revenue.[10] And of those, Google remains the only search engine that still keeps paid results out of its main listings.

The Big Three: Traffic, Relevance and Monetization

Commercial search engines require three key elements to ensure ad placement success. Traffic represents the flow of Web users to a search site. The search site must attract as much traffic as possible in order to maximize the possibility that some of that traffic will turn into a revenue-generating activity. Relevance represents the capacity of the search engine to deliver meaningful results to satisfy the user's keyword query. Relevance is made possible by the creation of mathematical algorithms. When executed, these algorithms define how search results are ranked for presentation to the user. Relevance algorithms vary across different search engines and are regularly tweaked in order to improve the user experience. For example, Google uses PageRank™, a set of algorithms that rank order results by the number of links to those pages.[11]

To improve Google's relevance and to combat the negative effects on relevance of a robust search engine optimization industry, some tweaking to the PageRank™ algorithm is used in addition to the raw link analysis. For example, some linking pages receive greater weight than others in the algorithm. Other search engines use a variation of link analysis methods and may combine link analysis with other ranking methods, including frequency of occurrence and proximity of words to each other.[12]

Monetization refers to the act of converting the all-important traffic into revenue for the search engine. Monetization can occur in many different ways. When search engines deliver ads to search results pages, advertisers pay fees to the search engine or their designated ad-feed partner for every ad impression that is delivered. If the searcher clicks on the ad link ("clickthrough"), additional revenue may accrue to the search engine.

The Basics: Keyword Buying

All search engine advertising purchases start with keyword buying. The advertiser purchases–leases, really–one or more keywords or key phrases that the advertiser believes searchers will use when searching for specific products or services. For example, an online video store may purchase the keyword movie or film or actual film titles such as harry potter, or a combination of any of these. Keyword buying enables the ad buyer to display a URL link when the searcher enters one or more of the leased keywords into the search engine. Some contracts may enable the purchaser to pay only for click-through. Contracts typically stipulate a time period, but they may also stipulate the number of impressions that will be delivered. An impression represents a single display of the advertiser's URL or banner on a user's screen.

Paid Search Deliverables

In paid inclusion programs, search engines and their ad-feed partners guarantee that their search engine will list pages from the advertiser's website in its index. However, paid inclusion typically does not guarantee that the advertiser's pages will rank high. At this writing, search engines Inktomi, AlltheWeb, and AltaVista offer paid inclusion programs.

Paid placement programs, by contrast, generally guarantee that a link to the advertiser's URL will be delivered in the search results on a matched keyword or keywords. Location of the delivered link generally governs the fees, so advertisers will pay more to be placed higher up the page in the search results.

Pay-per Options

After the advertiser's link is delivered to the page, additional gradations of monetization are possible based on whether the link is clicked on or otherwise processed by the searcher. Advertisers have a variety of pay-per

options, which escalate in price as the deliverable moves closer to an actual sale. Pay-per-impression enables advertisers to pay based on how many users were served their ads. In this model, users do not have to click on the ad for monetization to occur. In a pay-per-click model, advertisers pay agencies and/or media companies based on how many users clicked on an online ad. Pay-per-lead enables advertisers to pay only for each "sales lead" generated. For example, an advertiser might pay for every visitor who clicked on an ad or site and proceeded to complete a form. In pay-per-sale, advertisers pay based on how many sales transactions were generated as a direct result of the ad.

Keyword Bidding

Because so many advertisers want to lease the same keywords, a mechanism of keyword bidding has developed. Keyword bidding is the process of bidding on keywords for specific rankings in search engines. The more you bid, the higher your site will rank in the search engine you have selected. Google uses keyword bidding as a partial determinant of the placement of ads in its right sidebar. In a sponsored links list, higher-bidding advertisers get improved position at the top of the list, although the ranking formula also includes a popularity component.

Contextual Search

As the search engine marketing arena becomes more crowded, advertisers are seeking ways to improve relevancy. Contextual search is a process that drives selected paid search results by user behavior and perceived relevance as opposed to strict keyword matching. Google's AdSense[13] program is an example of contextual search: the program places ads on pages of the websites that sign up for the program, and the ad selection is contextually based on what Google believes the page to be about. Overture's ContentMatch[14] is a similar program.

How Paid Listings Affect Search Results

With the exception of Google, which separates ads completely from its main search results, all the major search engines have, to a greater or lesser extent, embedded paid listings in their main search results page. Some paid placement results are separated from algorithmically generated results and are accompanied by headers such as "Partner Sites" or "Sponsored Links." Paid listings may also be embedded in the actual Web search results; practices vary from search engine to search engine.

The presence of paid listings in search results may also vary depending on the searcher's keywords. If a searcher uses keywords that are likely to attract advertisers who lease them, paid listings are more likely to appear in search results. As a rule of thumb, the more commercial the search keywords, the more likely the search is to produce paid listings. A search for the keywords "network printers" is far more likely to produce paid results than a search for the keywords health "canada aboriginal." Keyword searches in technology, entertainment, and publishing topics are particularly prone to paid placements,[15] but the search engine industry is doing its best to extend the reach of paid placement, particularly in the area of local search (e.g., pizza in Toronto, hairdressers in Philadelphia).

Over time, it is arguable that paid listings, particularly paid placements (because they appear most prominently on the results page), can have great impact even on unpaid-for (or "pure") search results. Much like traditional advertising, (where brand awareness and eventually brand allegiance emerges from a combination of advertising and peer adoption), persistent viewing of paid listings inevitably creates greater awareness of those paid listings and their brands. With greater awareness comes the likelihood that those who create Web pages will link to those paid listings simply because they have seen them many times and can remember them. Many excellent but unpromoted search tools never appear on these link lists. Sites that have been part of a search engine marketing campaign are linked simply because they are well known.

As linkage to popular, well-known sites grows, even Google's PageRank,[TM] which ranks pure search hits by the number of other pages that link to them, has the cumulative effect of preferring what is popular. Advertising is an important factor in creating popularity, and the reach of paid placement extends even to pure search tools like Google that rely on a link analysis algorithm for ranking. As the persistent presence of paid listings creates greater awareness of particular websites, Web page creators link to these popular sites. As a result, the sites' PageRank™ increases, and the sites eventually rise higher in Google's search results. Moreover, as a larger number of popular sites climb higher in search results, many excellent informational resources (that languish in relative obscurity because they lack the funds for paid listings) crawl even further down the list of search results and off the searcher's radar entirely.

The Problem with Meta-search

Many Web searchers use meta-search engines–tools that send a query to several different search tools, retrieve the first several search results from each tool, remove the duplicates, and present the results in a rank-ordered list. Meta-search tools are problematic because they can capture paid listings served up by their search tool partners, but in the aggregation and display process they may strip these results of any indicators that they are paid links.[16]

The Role of the Federal Trade Commission

Many Web users wonder about the capacity of regulatory agencies to mandate the enforced disclosure on websites that some searched-for content is paid for. Since all the major search engines are produced by companies owned and operated in the United States, it is the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) that attempts to regulate the activities of search properties. The FTC treads a fine line between watchdog and cheerleader, attempting to protect consumers while not unduly restricting company growth and profitability.

Its practices with search engines illustrate its challenge. After becoming aware that search engines were inserting

paid results into their main search listings, the FTC sent a warning letter to all the major search engine properties[17] (except Google, because it didn't insert ads into search results), instructing them to disclose the insertion of paid listings or risk being in violation of key sections of the FTC Act.

This letter prompted the search engines to disclose information on how paid listings are included in search results, but just enough to avoid legal action. The resulting disclosure practices meet the FTC's criteria but are strikingly unclear to most Web searchers.[18] The onus is clearly on the user to learn about search engine practices.

The Major Players in Web Search

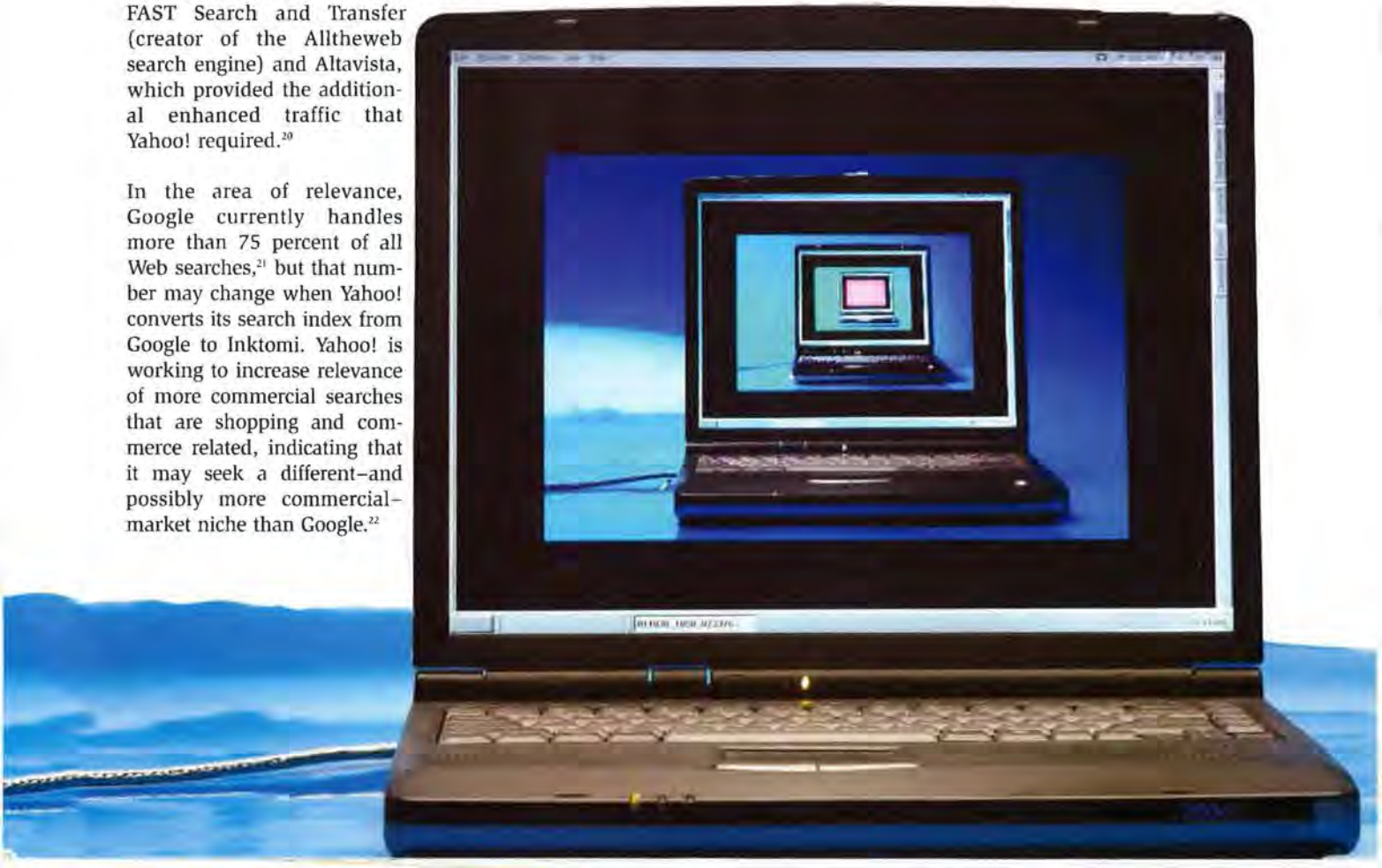
At the end of 2003, the first tier of search engine advertising consisted of two large players–Google and Yahoo! Both companies control huge amounts of traffic to their websites and both control their own monetization mechanisms. Google controls its own paid placement services through its AdWords and AdSense programs, which appear not only on the Google website and major partners like AOL, but on thousands of other websites that serve up Google ads through the AdSense algorithm.[19] Yahoo!, by contrast, built its powerhouse capacity principally through acquisitions. In late 2002, it acquired Inktomi, a provider of spidered Web databases and the originator of pay-for-inclusion and pay-for-spidering options. Yahoo!'s recently completed acquisition of paid-placement search tool Overture gave Yahoo! the capacity to compete directly with Google on monetization and further enabled Yahoo! to directly own its monetization properties. Overture already owned search properties FAST Search and Transfer (creator of the Alltheweb search engine) and Altavista, which provided the additional enhanced traffic that Yahoo! required.[20]

In the area of relevance, Google currently handles more than 75 percent of all Web searches,[21] but that number may change when Yahoo! converts its search index from Google to Inktomi. Yahoo! is working to increase relevance of more commercial searches that are shopping and commerce related, indicating that it may seek a different–and possibly more commercial–market niche than Google.[22]

The third major player in search engine advertising is–or will be–Microsoft. Although it has, at this writing, only the search engine MSN.com, a modest traffic generator, and lacks ownership of monetization properties, this situation is expected to change dramatically in the coming months as Microsoft starts to compete directly with Google and Yahoo! Journalists and analysts covering the Microsoft move into search engine advertising generally agree that Microsoft will capitalize on its dominant position in operating systems and will embed searching into the operating system, quite possibly without the need for a browser.[23] During the past year, Microsoft has been building relationships with paid content providers such as the Gale Group[24] and LexisNexis[25] to build pay-per-view content download options into new versions of Microsoft Office. Designed to enable users to quickly identify and purchase paid content based on a contextual search of currently open applications, it is only reasonable to assume that this contextual search could easily extend to include a Microsoft-owned search property filled with paid listings.

Google's Split Personality: Search Savior, Ad-monger

In making an ethical issue out of paid listings in search results, Google brilliantly established itself as a trusted search tool, the lone savior of Web searching. Google plays both relevance and monetization sides of Web search in an inspired way. It draws users to its search tool through finely tuned relevance and the promise of pure search results, yet it is one of the largest ad agencies on



the Web.[26] In addition to its large partners (like AOL), Google serves up ads to thousands of smaller websites through its AdSense program, which compensates host sites when Google's context-sensitive ads are clicked on.

The Future of Search

What would happen to searching if Google either were bought or went public, and when could that happen? In such a rapidly growing and changing search landscape, it is hard to predict. The topic has made headlines in the technology press for several months – which is itself often an indicator that a company and its investors are testing the waters to ensure that the timing is right for a public offering. There have also been rumors – largely unsubstantiated, it appears – of Microsoft being a possible suitor.

Companies go public for two reasons – to enable the principals to maximize their investment (essentially "cashing out" when the going is as good as they think it's going to get) or as a means of raising capital to enable additional growth. There is no particular reason to think that Google is short of cash and with no burning capital investment requirement going unfunded. But with Microsoft clearly planning a major entry into the search marketplace, Google has good reason to be worried, particularly because Microsoft can use its dominant position in the operating system market to fuel its use of search within the operating system. Many of Google's 1,000 or so employees will become instant multimillionaires, even billionaires, if Google launches an initial public offering and if that offering carries anticipated valuations. Moreover, the company has grown so large that the Securities and Exchange Commission may require Google to begin publishing its financial statements even if the company remains private. So why not capitalize on the loss of secrecy, cash out when the going is good, and raise billions of dollars in the process?[27]

Even if Google maintains its position as the only search engine without paid listings in search results, the search engine landscape will change dramatically in the coming months. As consolidation of Web search between three major players – Microsoft, Yahoo!, and Google – is completed, the next step will be competition for market dominance. The quest for users' eyeballs will become ever greater as the quest for market share increases.

The Quest for Authentic Search Results

Serious searchers need to understand and accept that there is not now and will never be just one starter that will be suitable for finding everything anywhere. Popping a few keywords into Google is easy; research is hard. The increasing commercialization of search will require all serious searchers to have a "search toolbox"–a list of starter sites that they can return to when they don't already know the best starting points for their information search.

There has been considerable interest among searchers in emerging schemes for improving relevance algorithms to enhance the user experience.[28] Unless relevance algorithms are radically altered and the pressure of commercial search somehow removed from the information-searching equation (which is hard to imagine), it is likely that serious searchers will be required to depend more on independently produced, quality-filtered link lists, catalogs, and directories of resources.

That is an enormous step away from our current dependence on commercial search tools and represents a sea change for most searchers. Methodically seeking quality information sources from excellent starter sites will be key in the future. Doing so will mitigate the ever-increasing effects of paid search, help searchers feel confident that they have fully explored the Web, and–perhaps most important–provide a clue as to when to stop searching and move on to other fee- and print-based information tools.

End Notes

[1] Every effort was made to ensure that information was accurate at the time of writing, but it is possible that some of the information in this article may have changed. The author wishes to thank Sharon Virtue of the optimization firm Virsha.com for her comments.

[2] Web Characterization Project, http://wcp.oclc.org. Data drawn from 2002 estimates.

[3] The search market represented $1.4 billion in 2002 and was projected to grow to $7.0 billion worldwide by 2007, according to Safa Rashtchy and Jason M. Avilio, *Golden Search: Dynamics of the Online Search Market and Scope of Opportunity*. US Bancorp Piper Jaffray, March 2003, p. 7.

[4] In 2002, 84 percent of all Americans expected to find information online related to news, health, business, and government services. In *Counting on the Internet*. Pew Internet and American Life Project, December 29, 2002. Available online at http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/pdfs/PIP_Expectations.pdf. Last viewed November 30, 2003.

[5] Danny Sullivan of Search Engine Watch estimates that eight major search services serve up over 625 million search requests per day. See his "Searches Per Day" at http://searchenginewatch.com/reports/article.php/2156461. Last viewed December 1, 2003.

[6] Robin Greenspan, "More money = more surfing." October 14, 2003. http://www.internetnews.com/stats/article.php/3091091. Last viewed November 30, 2003.

[7] See, for example, "Advertising: Attitudes, Preferences and Engagements," In *E-Marketer.com, An Elephant in the Room: the Online At-Work Audience*. February 2003. http://www.emarketer.com/products/report.php?atwork_feb03. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[8] "Web Searches: The Fix Is In." *Business Week* Online,

October 6, 2003. http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/03_40/b3852098_mz063.htm. Viewed November 30, 2003.

[9] See, for example, Google's statements at http://www.google.com/technology/index.html, Alltheweb.com's at http://www.alltheweb.com/help/faqs/web_search, and Altavista's at http://www.altavista.com/about. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[10] According to analysts at US Bancorp Piper Jaffray, Google generated an estimated $294 million in 2002, Yahoo! $140 million, and MSN $138 million. Safa Rashtchy and Jason M. Avilio, *Golden Search: Dynamics of the Online Search Market and the Scope of Opportunity*, US Bancorp Piper Jaffray, March 2003, p. 6.

[11] "Our Search: Google Technology" at http://www.google.com/technology/index.html. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[12] For an overview of ranking mechanisms of the major search engines, see Greg Notess, "Search Engine Features Chart," *Search Engine Showdown*, http://searchengineshowdown.com/features. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[13] https://www.google.com/adsense. Viewed November 26, 2003.

[14] http://www.content.overture.com/d/USm/ac/ba/cm.jhtml. Viewed November 26 2003.

[15] For a fuller discussion of the competition for links on the web, see D. M. Pennock, G. W. Flake, S. Lawrence, E. J. Glover, and C. L. Giles. "Winners don't take all: Characterizing the competition for links on the web." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 99(8): 5207-5211, April 2002. http://www.pnas.org/cgi/content/full/99/8/5207. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[16] Angela Gunn, "In Search of Disclosure: Meta-search Sites Compile Results But Don't Always Tell You Who's Paying for Placement." April 17, 2003. http://www.consumerwebwatch.org/news/gunn/metasearch030416.htm . Viewed December 1, 2003.

[17] The text of the letter is available at http://www.ftc.gov/os/closings/staff/commercialalertatatch.htm.

[18] Leslie Marable, "False Oracles: Consumer Reaction to Learning the Truth About How Search Engines Work." June 30, 2003. http://www.consumerwebwatch.org/news/searchengines/index.html. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[19] See, for example, how context-sensitive ads are served up by Google at sites as diverse as the almanac Infoplease (http://www.infoplease.com) and NationMaster (http://www.nationmaster.com/). Ad delivery will vary in an attempt to deliver ads contextually relevant to the search performed.

[20] An excellent online visualization chart of the major U.S. search property relationships is produced by search optimizer Bruce Clay and is available at http://www.bruceclay.com/searchenginerelationshipchart.htm. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[21] Danny Sullivan, "comScore Media Metrix Search Engine Ratings." *Search Engine Watch*, October 28, 2003. http://www.searchenginewatch.com/reports/article.php/2156431. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[22] Stephanie Olsen,"Yahoo! takes a leaf out of Google's book." *Silicon.com*, November 4, 2003. http://www.silicon.com/networks/webwatch/0,39024667,39116742,00.htm. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[23] Bill Gates provided some clues to the idea of "seamless computing" during remarks made at the 2003 Comdex Conference in Las Vegas. A transcript is available at http:/www.microsoft.com/billgates/speeches/2003/11-16comdex2003.asp. See also Michael Kanellos, "Microsoft Aims for Search On Its Own Terms," *Cnet News*, November 24, 2003. http://news.com.com/2100-1008_3-5110910.html?tag=nefd_lede. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[24] "Gale Group to offer online business information to Microsoft Office 2003 customers." Press release, March 10, 2003. http://www.galegroup.com/servlet/PressArchiveDetailServlet?articleID=200303_office. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[25] "Microsoft Office System to Include LexisNexis Legal Research." Press release, October 21, 2003. http://www.lexisnexis.com/about/releases/0626.asp. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[26] As a private company, Google's exact revenues are not known, but could be as high as $1 billion, according to Eric J. Savitz, "Waiting for the Big One." *Barron's Online*, October 13, 2003. http://online.wsj.com/article_barrons_email/0,,SB106583046445910900-H9jeoNplaB2m5yvZX6HbKaEm4,00.html. Viewed October 13, 2003.

[27] Fred Vogelstein, "Can Google Grow Up?" *Fortune*148(12) (December 8, 2003) :102-113. http://www.fortune.com/fortune/technology/articles/0,15114,548765,00.html. Viewed December 1, 2003.

[28] Paula McKinnon, "It's in the algorithms: a glimpse into the future of mapping the web." *Information Highways*, 11(1) (November-December 2003): 12-14.

professional development update

The Future of Professional Development: A Vision and a Roadmap

By John Lowery

It has been 90 days since I began my job as Director of Professional Development at SLA, and during that time I have begun to learn about a vibrant, energetic organization that is very well founded and is yet extremely interested in innovation. I can honestly say that I have never before seen such an overwhelming and universal interest in furthering professional development, with a consistent "whatever it takes" attitude. I have been in the field of education and professional development for almost 25 years, and during that time I have strived to combine innovation and technology with excellence and efficiency. During the course of my career, I have developed educational offerings and professional development programs for many organizations, including the Navy, the Air Force, various Department of Defense organizations, the Department of Energy, General Physics, Westinghouse, the State of Georgia, CSR America, SAP, and PeopleSoft. Most recently I have been a director of education and professional development for two different software companies. In this capacity I developed and launched blended learning strategies, employing a combination of traditional classroom training, Web seminars, and self-paced e-learning, for such diverse customers as McKesson Corporation, Cardinal Health, PETsMART, and Sysco Corporation.

Last summer, when I first came to SLA Headquarters in Washington, Lynn Smith asked me for my ideas about professional development for the Special Libraries Association. I explained to her the vision I had developed for SLA professional development, based on the research I had done on the Association. When I left that day, Lynn gave me two documents to read and asked that I send her my comments on them. The documents were the Professional Development Committee's *Strategic Direction and Vision document and the revised Competencies for Information Professionals of the 21st Century*. Before my plane landed in Atlanta, I had drafted a response to Lynn. My interest in the position at SLA had turned into excitement. I had never before had such a wonderful opportunity to enter a position where I would have not only the vision and backing of a strong committee, but also a well-designed roadmap for professional development, as outlined in the Competencies.

The initiatives that I outlined in my first meeting with Lynn have solidified during my first two months. They include the following:

- An SLA Online Learning Community that is organized with and driven by an award-winning Learning Management System, allowing members to manage their education and professional improvement online.

- SLA Certification Programs designed to allow members to demonstrate achievement of each of the Core Competencies.

- Certification Tracks individualized for each member.

- Continuing Education Units, authorized by a governing body such as the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET), awarded for all courses and seminars.

- Partnerships with information organizations and higher learning institutions to allow us to offer online courses and programs that are both valuable and prestigious.

The first and most essential part of this vision is the online site. The online Professional Development site will be a virtual learning community. When you log on, the Learning Management System will recognize you by your user ID and password. You will instantly be supplied with the information that applies to your development path, such as the Certification Track in which you are enrolled, the courses you have completed, the courses in which you are currently enrolled, and the courses you need to take. You will be able to review upcoming courses that are part of your Certification Track and sign up for courses online. You will be able to track and control your professional development progress at any time. In addition, when you log on, you will be given the opportunity to log into your Chapter or your Division, or as a member of your Caucus. Once you are logged in to a specific group, you will be able to communicate and collaborate with other members of that group.

Because the Certification Program will be driven by and based on the Core Competencies, it will be the foundation of the new professional development offerings. We anticipate that there will be four Certification Tracks, one for each of the Core Competencies, offering the following certificates:

- SLA Certification in Management of Information Organizations
- SLA Certification in Management of Information Resources
- SLA Certification in Management of Information Services
- SLA Certification in Management of Information Tools and Technologies

We will develop a separate curriculum outline for each Certification Track, containing terminal and enabling objectives for completion of the program. Courses will be selected and/or developed to meet each objective. Each Certification Track will also require completion of courses in associated Personal Competencies. We hope to have all four curriculum outlines completed by the end of the summer and we will begin identifying courses to meet the objectives immediately thereafter.

To ensure that the SLA Certification Program is transferable and has independent merit, we are going to take the steps necessary to have courses and seminars offered through SLA meet the certification standards of the IACET. At the core of IACET certification requirements are ten criteria, each having a set of associated practices. Conforming to these practices will require some changes in how SLA-sponsored courses are developed and delivered, but the ability to earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for the completion of each course will be worth the effort. IACET certification and the ability to earn CEUs will make the programs more valuable to you, and will also make it easier for you to obtain approval and funding to take courses.

Many associations and academic institutions offer courses and online programs that would meet the objectives of our proposed certification programs, and we are beginning to look for such organizations with which to partner. The ability to co-sponsor courses and seminars will strengthen our program, improve our offerings, and enhance our efficiency. We are working with the Knowledge Exchange group to locate institutions whose online offerings are both robust and reputable.

As stated in the Professional Development Committee's Strategic document, we want to improve SLA professional development so that it "will be known as one of the leading PD programs among professional societies and will be seen as the ideal model for support of life long learning and constant professional skills enhancement." To give strength and credibility to our professional development initiative, it makes sense to offer courses under the auspices of our own academic governing body. For example, if you have met all of the objectives of the program, you will receive a Certificate of Management of Information Resources from The SLA Academy of Information Management.

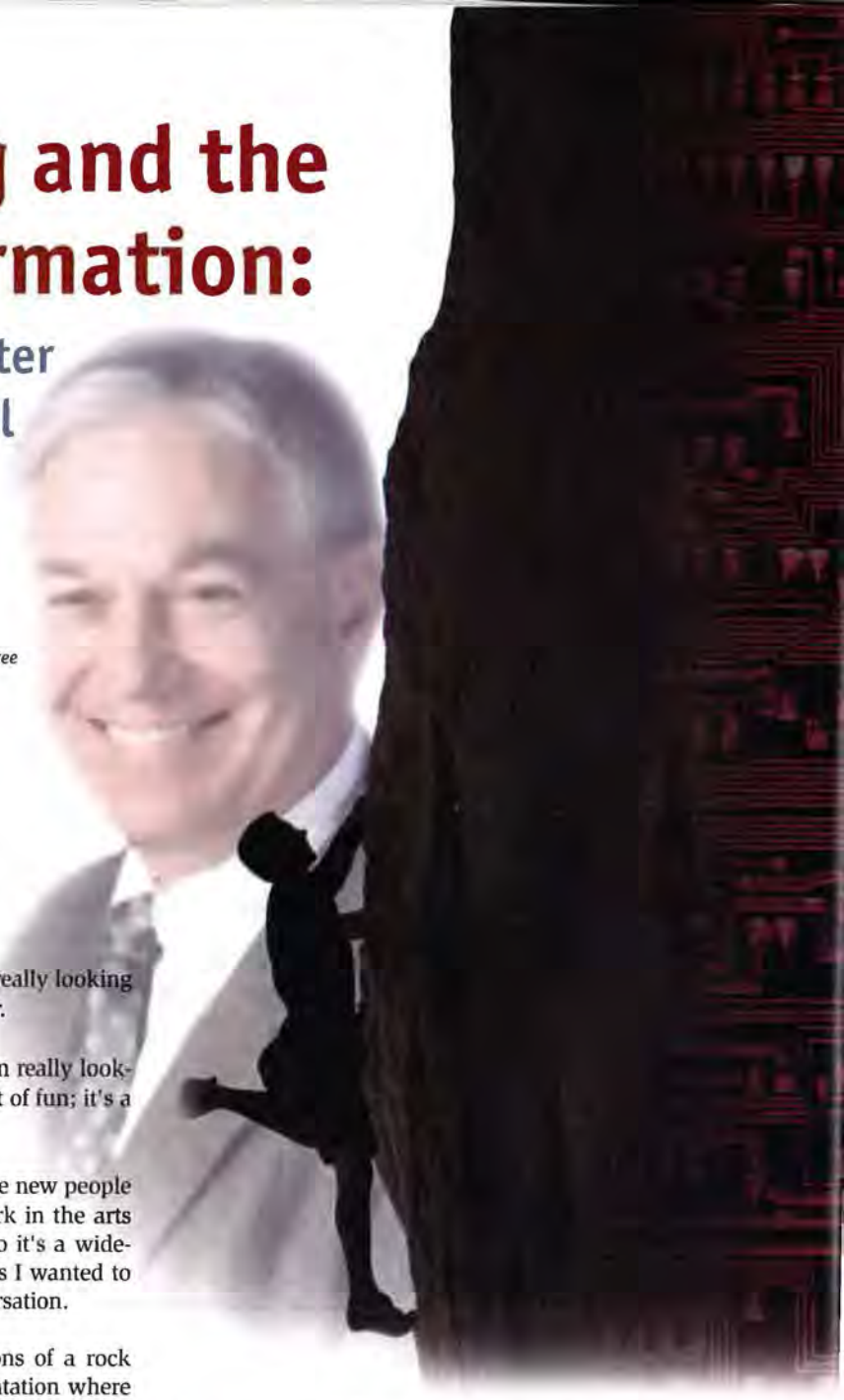
The thoughts and ideas that I have presented here are only the highlights of the possibilities for professional development at SLA. I will be relying heavily on the advice of the Professional Development Committee as we go forward. The transformation of the professional development offering will require a great deal of work, but it will be well worth the effort. Knowing that I have the full commitment of the SLA staff and the SLA Leadership will make the job easier. One of the major objectives that Janice presented to the Board is to Promote and Strengthen Through Learning and she is totally committed to achieving that objective. The Board has demonstrated their dedication to professional development by making Innovation and Continuous Learning one of the Core Values that are a central part of the new Vision Statement.

Our goal is simple: we want to be the only place that you as an SLA member need to go to increase your value as an information professional and to further your career. Your SLA membership will be your passport to a learning community that is unparalleled for ease of access, educational excellence, and professional value.

Contact John Lowery at JLowery@sla.org

Rock Climbing and the World of Information:

Technologist Carl Ledbetter to Headline SLA's Annual Conference in Nashville



By Suzi Hayes

Suzi Hayes is the SLA 2004 Annual Conference Program Committee Chair. She can be contacted at suzihayes@earthlink.net

Suzi Hayes: It's very nice to meet you. We're really looking forward to having you as our keynote speaker.

Carl Ledbetter: It's good to meet you also. I'm really looking forward to the talk. I'm sure it will be a lot of fun; it's a great audience for this theme.

SH: We have quite a variety of people, from the new people to the very experienced, and people who work in the arts as well as people who work in technology, so it's a wide-ranging audience. I have a couple of questions I wanted to ask, and we'll see where that leads the conversation.

I recently read an article on leadership lessons of a rock climber. I know that you recently did a presentation where you arrived by rappelling down a rock wall, and I was wondering whether you did that just to get people's attention or if there were some message as part of that?

CL: It is a way to get people's attention. I am a climber, and a U.S. Mountain Guides certified lead climber. But there is an aspect of climbing that has sort of a tangential touch on what I talk about in technology. I'm a technologist at heart, and there's a lot of technology and technique in rock climbing, as there is in some of the other things that I do in my professional life. But what is important about those subjects, both rock climbing and the technology topics we're going to talk about during my speech, is what is interesting to a far larger audience of people than those who are expert in the technology components of either. Rappelling down a rock wall is a dramatic way to capture attention at the beginning in order to segue over to discussing the technology that allows it to happen safely.

SH: Would you elaborate on that a little bit?

CL: Well, certainly, with respect to what I was hoping to talk about in front of the SLA. There are a lot of people who think the issues that surround the Internet, or more generally networks beyond even the Internet, and the security and privacy issues that are associated with networks are extremely difficult technically. The complexities of networking involve all kinds of stuff down to very, very delicate issues having to do even with physics at the optical layer of the network, and continuing up into very abstruse mathematical theorems on things such as encryption technologies and the problems that swirl around security and privacy.

But as a technologist, what I'm always at pains to tell people is that although technology is important in making

things work, it's almost never the thing that drives us toward what we're doing. And it's almost never the answer–or at least not the complete answer–to the question of how we control the technologies that we're creating.

By that I mean that the issues that surround security and privacy on networks, although they do have technical components, are essentially public policy problems. We have to decide what we want the technology to do in order to make the things that we do with that technology acceptable to us sociologically, politically, legally, and in a lot of other ways. And on those other grounds, there are a large number of people besides technologists who ought to be involved in the discussion. In fact, probably in most instances, it's those other groups who should lead the discussion and control the outcome.

The problem we face here is due to what C. P. Snow called the two cultures, where technologists, on the one hand, and people who are not in technology, on the other, have a hard time talking effectively to each other about these issues. One of the things that I try very hard to do is to make sure that I bridge that gap. So whether it's doing a Rubik's Cube on stage or rappelling down a rock wall, what I'm attempting to do is illustrate that these technology issues are things that you can touch, even if you don't understand the specific science that underlies them.

SH: That's interesting, because those of us who are in the library and information profession also feel that it's our job to bridge the gap.

CL: You bet. In fact, that's why I'm so interested to be able to do this talk in front of your group. I think library professionals are literally at the forefront of where all of these issues come together.

SH: We think so too. Getting the attention of all of the powers that be is the hard part.

CL: Yes, absolutely. And by the way, that "getting the attention of the powers that be" will be part of what I talk about during my speech. For instance, I have a sort of funny and dramatic but also a difficult and cautionary story to tell about testifying in front of the joint House-Senate Committee on Science and Technology back in the early 1990s. Al Gore was the chairman of the committee at the time, so it was before he became Vice President in '93.

I testified to them about existing U.S. laws that prohibited, for instance, the export by the U.S. computer industry of certain mathematical algorithms in software, what are called strong encryption technologies. The U.S. at the time actually classified the export of those strong encryption technologies in the same law and by the same mechanism that it controlled the proliferation of nuclear weapons. And yet, from a conference room on the Hill in the capital of the United States, I downloaded, imported, software that would have been illegal for anyone in the U.S. to export, from the website of a high school kid from Czechoslovakia (and it was still Czechoslovakia at the time). What I was pointing out to them is that it was trivially easy for me–or anyone else anywhere in the world–to get this technology over the Net from an 18-year-old in Eastern Europe, and yet it would be illegal–in fact, it would be a serious felony–for me to export it from the United States, even to mail it back to where it had come from, which was a pretty absurd situation.

What struck me as I was going through all of that is what motivates me now to be interested in helping to translate between the public policy and technical worlds: The people in that conference room that day, mostly congressmen and senators and their staffs, were very bright, highly motivated people who were just trying to do the right thing. But they didn't understand what the issues were. They were baffled by this stuff because they didn't understand the technology components well enough to make good public policy decisions.

And, of course, people coming to present their case on this or any other complicated issue with a technical component, no matter which side of the debate they're on, will be making their arguments for reasons having to do with their own interests–and that's not necessarily bad–but whether it is economic interest or whatever else, these advocates will present to decisionmakers diametrically opposite views on what to do, even what is possible technically. It is very hard for the responsible decisionmakers to sort out the technical issues in a way that makes sense to them so that they can come to reasonable conclusions. As long as technology is so inaccessible to such decisionmakers, we as a society are vulnerable to having decisions made that are adverse to our long-term interest. And that's why it is so important to find a way to bridge the gap between the two cultures, to help well-motivated people understand the implications of technology choices for public policy.

Of course, I have positions on most of these issues, some of them pretty strongly held. But I think what is more worrisome to me than the fact that the "powers that be" would institute things that are against the positions I hold–what really scares me–is the fact that they might do so without even understanding what those positions are, or the opposite of them, for that matter. It is so terribly dangerous that people, now that the Net reaches just about everywhere, are still worried about the wrong things technically. For instance, when people talk about computer security, they all too frequently mean something like that they're afraid somebody is going to steal their credit when they make a purchase over the World Wide Web. Well, you're far more likely to have the 19-year-old kid who dropped out of high school two years ago who took your credit card last night at the restaurant steal your identity than you are to have your credit card number stolen on an SSI link over the network. You ought to be worried about some other things if you're using the Internet, things people almost never think about, but which are much more worrisome. Getting people to understand and focus on what the real threats are is important.

It's also very important for people to understand that, although technology can do a lot of things, we may not want to do some of them. Every time you make a choice

about what technology should do to make something more secure or more private, or whatever it is, you will be making a trade-off associated with that decision. You simply cannot stop all of the bad stuff, even if you can decide what things are bad, a pretty hard problem in itself, without incurring a cost, in either dollars, effort, or inconvenience. Every time you make something harder to do because you're trying to prevent something bad from happening, you also make harder to do things that you want to have happen, and these choices are very complicated. It's not necessary to understand all about the complications, and particularly about the technologies underlying them, but it is important for the people who make these decisions to understand the consequences of the choices, and those consequences usually have deep technical roots.

The sort of naïve viewpoint that a lot of people have is that we technologists in the computer industry should just stop all of the bad stuff and let all of the good stuff go ahead. It's just not that easy. There is always a trade-off involved in such decisions, and it's important for good public policy decisionmaking that we make those trade-offs explicit and understandable. We all make such risk trade-offs all the time in our daily lives, even if we don't realize it. For instance, every time there's some horrendous accident, an airplane crash, for example, somebody pontificates about the fact that we have to make airplanes completely safe. Well, those of us who sort of do this for a living sit there and cringe when that happens, because it sets completely unreasonable, I'd even say irresponsible, expectations. We know that actually, no, that's not what we're trying to do. First, we can't; and second, we as a society don't really want that, because we don't want the concomitant consequences. People would never tolerate it if that were the real objective, because eliminating all of the risk associated with whatever we're doing, whether it's flying in an airplane, driving a car, or using the Net, even if it were technically possible, would induce a level of inconvenience that would be unacceptable. What we really ought to be doing, instead, is to simultaneously make the level of risk we tolerate acceptable, while we make the cost for offsetting any greater risks reasonable to society.

People say you can't place a price on human life, for instance. Well, that's actually not true. We do it all the time. The actuarial folks will tell you exactly what a human life is worth, at least on average. I know that's emotionally very disturbing to a lot of people, and of course nobody literally intends to say that the value of a life is fully measurable in dollar terms, that it's worth a million or a million and a half dollars. But the point is by our behavior, by our choices as a society, we are setting that value; we are making that trade-off about cost and risk all the time. In exactly the same way, we're making choices, or not making them in certain cases now, about trade-offs between the cost and the risk for things that we're trying to control on the computer, on the network.

The security and privacy issue risks that are associated with the network–every single one of them–have answers. We can stop just about anything bad, just about all the time, with a pretty high degree of confidence. But there's a cost associated, both the cost of installing the technology in money and time and effort, and also the cost in what, by deploying that technology solution, we prohibit that we didn't intend to prohibit–the unintended consequences of our choices. And this audience should be very familiar with those kinds of issues.

SH: Oh, yes. The filtering issue...

CL: Absolutely. So you're a wonderful audience for me, because I often use those kinds of things as an example to show other audiences composed of people who have never thought about it why it's so hard. So, for instance, if we want to prevent some really ugly stuff from happening on the Net–and of course, we do–we start thinking of technical ways to accomplish that goal. And one of the technology choices is to filter on certain key words or addresses. But if we do that, nobody can ever find out anything about the cost of real estate in Middlesex County, because the filter blocks access because "Middlesex" has the keyword "sex" in it. Yes, we could get around that by adding another layer of technical sophistication to the software, but we're chasing our tail since that will introduce yet another kind of problem. It's a real problem, and there's no simple answer to it.

SH: The article on rock climbing and leadership was discussing exactly the same points that you are. That yes, there are risks, and the risks may be horrendous, but the probability of that risk happening is so infinitesimal that it's a risk you're willing to take.

CL: Precisely. That's such a good example. I use it all the time as a way of illustrating the point. For instance, when I do rappel down a rock wall as a way of getting on the stage, I always make some joke to introduce this issue of risk trade-offs. Inevitably someone will ask me why I go rock climbing, because they think it's terribly risky. My answer is I do it because skiing is too dangerous. And, of course, everybody in the audience laughs because they go skiing, especially when I do it in Colorado or Utah. They would never go rock climbing. They'd think how dangerous climbing is. But I've never been hurt rock climbing, while almost everybody I know who's a skier has been pretty badly hurt at some point. In skiing there is a pretty high probability of minor injuries, a moderately high probability of severe injuries, and quite a small probability of worse. In rock climbing (when it's done right), there is also a small probability of terrible consequences, but there is actually a much lower risk of moderate or minor injury. So which is the more dangerous sport?

And that's precisely the issue that you've raised in your question. There is some probability of a bad risk occurring in nearly everything. And you try to guard against the highest probability of the worst risk, but you can't get all of the risk out, and you often can't eliminate all we'd like without inducing some high probability of a less awful, but significant, inconvenience or risk. Public policy decisions should be based on a careful understanding and analysis of those risk and cost and inconvenience trade-offs. I have lots of really interesting examples that I think your audience will

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love, that will help people understand exactly the sweep of that, from the economic issues that are associated with our choices to other kinds of concerns that touch on things like criminal activity on the Net–what wrongdoing could be concealed by certain kinds of privacy or encryption technologies –and the trade-off of preventing those crimes against the inconvenience and loss of privacy of individuals when those technologies are compromised.

SH: I thought I might change directions here. One of the reasons that we were interested in having you speak to us was because you're known for your global perspective on information technology. And I know that you manage offices around the world. Do you have any insights on how to be an effective manager on a worldwide basis? Or if it matters where your management offices, or the people you're working with, are located?

CL: It matters a great deal. And it is intimately connected with some of the issues we're talking about on the Net. In fact, some of the examples that I've chosen to line up for this talk touch exactly on that issue. So let me give you a little preview of some of them.

When we do international banking, the standard that most of the world uses now is an encryption technology that was developed in the United States. It's called the digital encryption standard, or DES. The digital encryption standard is very complex technically. It's a very, very good algorithm for encrypting information, particularly those kinds of pieces of information concerning financial transactions that you wouldn't want disrupted. It has all kinds of very clever mechanisms for confirmation and what's called non-repudiation, all things that are good to do for secure financial transaction.

There's a side note to this technology, that when the original DES was introduced back in 1977 as what is called a 56-bit encryption technology (the larger the number of bits, the stronger the algorithm is theoretically), it was thought it would be secure in computing for a long, long time. By 1998 the Electronic Frontier Foundation showed that by diligent effort you can actually crack DES–they did it in three days. It was difficult. It was costly to do it. It took some very smart people and a lot of computing power. And it's not at all clear that it would be worth it to actually set up a computer to crack whatever comes through encrypted by DES on a general basis–which goes again to the risk versus cost trade-off, because you might expend all that money, time, and effort to crack a message only to discover that it was a message from my wife asking me to stop by the dog groomer to pick up the dog on the way home from work, in which case, you would have spent thousands of dollars worth of computer time to find out something of no consequence. So the fact that DES can be cracked doesn't mean it's necessarily an inadequate technology.

But if DES can be broken at all by computing equipment that is readily available, like a PC, then we'd want to know it so that we can provide greater levels of safety through stronger encryption. As computing power has increased since 1998, that has become an issue. I actually managed to decrypt a DES message myself a couple of years ago on my laptop–exactly the kind of laptop I'll have with me during the talk–and I'll tell that story. So the industry has adapted to that by deciding to use a stronger encryption technology called triple DES. But let's put that aside, because you asked about the international implications, and there is one in the DES story.

The international issue for DES is that the French wouldn't use it. Nor did they permit it to be used with financial transactions with French banks. And the reason for that is quite interesting. The French, from the days of de Gaulle in World War II, insisted upon having a completely different set of codes from all the rest of the allies because they were worried about French secrets–about keeping them secret even from allies. The French government's official position about DES was that, although no professional cryptographer has ever found a way to do this, they were afraid that, because it was developed in the United States, the U.S. government, the U.S. national laboratories, the National Security Agency, or other U.S. businesses or agencies might have what's called a back door to the code. In other words, the French were worried that the U.S. government or some agency of the government might use that back door to decrypt French financial and diplomatic information, and compromise French interests.

Now, just so people don't get on their high horse about it, there are people other than the French who think that there might be a back door in DES. There are professionals in the United States, colleagues of mine, who, although they have never offered any proof and they have no evidence, are still

skeptical that the United States would have put out this very strong encryption standard without having some way to break it. And the reason for that is that all of these people are programmers. It is almost a matter of routine–in fact, it's standard practice in most software companies–that programmers put something into their code to allow them to break into the code when they're maintaining it, a perfectly legitimate practice. So the notion that there wouldn't be one in DES is something that many security professionals find hard to believe.

So there's an interesting international problem. How do you convince the French that DES, or the triple DES standard, is secure enough to do diplomatic and economic transactions with banks in France?

SH: The stuff of spy novels.

CL: Yes, absolutely. It's exactly like spy novels.

SH: And all of our spy novels tell us yes, there is a back door, and, of course, the evil-doer can find it.

CL: Absolutely. And it's not all that far-fetched since almost every software program I've ever been associated with in my career has had a back door. It's a perfectly legitimate technique that allows the company that invents the code to act in the interest of the customer under times of duress when something's going wrong and there's a maintenance issue that has to be solved. So, although my belief in the case of DES is that there is no back door (some very smart people have tried to find one for years without success), it's not a completely nutty concern.

Here's another example with international consequences. There is a burgeoning habit of software companies moving software engineering tasks offshore. Just last night on CNN, I saw that there is a big hubbub about the fact that some diligent reporter has discovered that IBM is thinking very seriously of moving lots of its software programming jobs to Ireland or Bangalore, India, or to Eastern Europe, as many companies have done. There are lots of places in India, Ukraine, and other parts of Eastern Europe with very well-trained programmers who are tremendous at writing code, especially if it's Java- or Linux-based code. And American companies are moving programming over to these countries because it's so much less expensive for them to do it. I mean literally a factor of four to five less expensive for the same level of talent and productivity.

So here you are, a company in the United States doing this. Or you're the U.S. government looking over the shoulders of companies doing this. One of the most dangerous threats in this era of terrorism, one of the most severe threats against the United States, is the economic cost we'd bear if somebody could bring down the Net. If somebody could bring down the network, the mechanism in which such a large fraction today of the economic interest of the United States is involved, we'd be catastrophically hurt. So much business goes over the Net that bringing it down, or making people believe that it's dangerous to do business there, would be terribly damaging to the United States.

So think about it–you've got people over in Bangalore, India, writing code. Some of them may not particularly like the United States. And maybe one of those programmers may decide he's going to write a trap into some piece of code so that he can bring the application, or the whole network, down once the code is deployed by all of the banks in the United States. The banks don't know about that, because this is a piece of code that's written by a prestigious American company, like IBM or Sun or Microsoft or Novell or any of them. And yet there is some bad thing that's been inserted in the code, and it's managed to get through the testing process. And believe me, there are a lot of ways that can happen. How do we protect against that?

How do you put in place provisions that would allow companies, not only in the United States but in other places in the world, to know that there isn't something bad embedded in software they have to rely on, especially if it's not even known to the company that is responsible for writing and maintaining the code? That's a very hard problem technically. If people had any idea of how big and how complex these software programs are that we all depend upon, and how vulnerable we all are to this risk, they would be shocked.

The number of known bugs, for instance, known errors, known problems in code that is shipped by very good, reputable companies in the industry, runs sometimes as many as tens of thousands. Microsoft, for instance, issued 72 different security patches to Windows XP in 2002, more than one a week, trying to fix the known problems. And there are many unknown ones, of course, that crop up all of the time. Who's to say that there isn't one that's been deliberately planted by a saboteur, and how would you guard against that?

SH: You were very active in the Microsoft lawsuits; that was another one of my questions. Personally, as an ordinary consumer in my workplace and at my home, I haven't noticed anything being the least bit different since the Microsoft trials took place. How do things look from your point of view?

CL: Well, that's a very complicated question. First of all, there are several different cases under way at the same time with regard to Microsoft. The original antitrust case that was brought against Microsoft did result in a consent decree that Microsoft signed which said that Microsoft, without admitting any guilt for anything in the past, would agree to do certain things in a different way. Every piece of evidence I have at the moment is that Microsoft is doing what it said it would do in that consent decree.

On the other hand, many of the things that Microsoft was charged with doing, and this is the complaint that continues by some of its competitors and by the states that remain in the case, are pretty old by the standards of an industry that reinvents itself every 18 months–all of the issues in the U.S. Department of Justice case date from 1998 or earlier, fully four generations ago in the industry. More interesting is the Microsoft case in Europe. Although it sounds the

same in the general press, that case is a very different case brought against Microsoft by the European Union, the European Commission. And many observers in the United States and Europe point out that Microsoft has gained the benefit of its previous wrongdoing in comingling, bundling, pieces of software together so that it would be difficult to separate out, thereby driving other companies out of business, and as a direct result of that causing the prices of software to rise (or not to fall) for consumers, which is the only issue that antitrust law actually addresses.

Microsoft still insists that there's no way that it could dissemble the various pieces of code that are part of its operating system, whether it's the directory, or the media player, or the browser, which are today a part of Windows. I certainly have a technical opinion about whether or not that would have been possible to do, and I testified about that. But Microsoft and the Justice Department reached a settlement about how they were going to handle the issue going forward, so, in the United States at least, this is pretty much resolved, for the moment anyway.

But it's a complicated issue that will arise again, with Microsoft or other companies, because the computer industry can't really progress when there are too many different standards. The situation is very much like the railroads in Australia. I don't know if you've ever tried to ride all the way across Australia from Sydney to Perth, but you literally have to change trains four times. And you might say, well, that's no big deal, you've got to rest anyway, stretch your legs or whatever.... But the reason you have to change trains is that there are four different gauges of railway in Australia. They can't run all the way across the continent on the same tracks, so they run tracks of different gauges into the same railroad stations, and you have to change trains to get on the different-sized track.

Similarly, the problem in the computing industry is that if you don't have some common set of interoperability standards programmers can write to, nothing works. On the other hand, if you have only one standard, you've permitted a situation where you have a monopolist who's in control of things and can pretty much dictate to the industry and set prices in an arbitrary way that's injurious to consumers and to business.

What we're really struggling with in the industry, and what the courts are struggling with, and, to be fair, what even Microsoft is struggling with, is to find a way to get to some reasonable number of standards and a set of interoperability conventions that work in a reasonable way most of the time, so that people can write software and expect it to work across the whole network.

Just as the Microsoft case has been very interesting in this regard, because Microsoft sort of fell into, by its practices and maybe by the inattention of both government agencies and its competitors, a situation where it was in control of several of those major standards, and then used that monopoly to try to leverage itself into control of some other key technologies and standards, there is a contrasting lesson in what happened to Apple. Apple took a very different approach. It had what is called a closed operating system. From the middle '70s on, its operating system (OS) was one that did not permit programmers to do things in the sort of a free-form way, with lots of hooks into the guts of the operating system, that DOS, the original Microsoft OS, did. And the market pretty soundly voted on that choice. Apple has about 4 percent market share as a result of that choice. Because a lot of people–I would have been one of them 25 or 30 years ago–would have said, "I can't do what I want to do with Apple's OS, because I can't see the things that I want to see." By contrast, Microsoft opened up DOS. It got everybody to jump on to it. And then it moved users to Windows when it became successful. And then once it had everybody on the flypaper, it rolled it up and put it in its pocket. We can hardly blame it for trying to do that, I guess. So this is a really complicated issue.

SH: Yes, indeed. So I suspect we could go on talking about this for a good long, but I want to go in a different direction once again. A large percentage of SLA membership comes from academic libraries. And I know that you have a background as a professor.

CL: I do. I was a professor and an academic dean, so yes, I've been there.

SH: And do you still teach?

CL: Well, whenever I get a chance. I do guest lectures occasionally, and I love to do it. The kind of talk I'm doing for you is an extension of that–it's teaching, in a way.

SH: Do you see any noteworthy differences or commonalties in information-seeking concerns between the academic and the corporate environments?

CL: I do. There are certainly more similarities than there are differences, but there are differences both in tradition and in necessity. The kinds of things you need to be able to do,

but also in the way in which people choose to do them, will be different in academia from the way they are in business or government. The academic world has always had a much greater tradition of open exchange of information. It's really the currency of the realm for professors to publish results, to have those results be known, to further their own reputations and the reputations of their universities, their laboratories, and their departments.

So because of these traditions, and for other good reasons, the academic world tends to be considerably more open about the interchange of information than the business world, and certainly more so than the government world is, because in the commercial and government realms there are many economic, competitive, military, defense, or security issues for which certain information has to be much more strictly controlled. Again, we're always fighting for the right balance, and the weighing mechanism is very different in these different arenas.

Moreover, the academic world is the origin of several of the movements that are affecting the computer industry in important and complex ways. For instance, publication of encryption algorithms, the rise of the open source movement, the Linux world, the 48 different open source licenses that are out there, the copyleft movement–I'm sure your folks will have heard of that, right?

SH: Yes.

CL: So those movements all either derive from, or are in large part fueled by, people who come out of or are associated in a strong way with the academic world. And many of those things that come from these movements have been beneficial to the industry because they sort of keep it balanced. In general, of course, the corporate world and the government world, and, particularly, the military or defense world have far greater reason for wanting to maintain confidentiality and security about what they're doing. But they may also go too far in the other direction. And, of course, that's the reason we have all of these battles with the Freedom of Information Act, over what access people ought to have, under what circumstances, to what information.

The academic world tends to fall predictably in most instances on one side of that debate. And the defense world tends to fall pretty predictably on the other side. And the commercial world tends to have a little bit of both, with its interest being generally motivated by protection of intellectual property and commercial interest.

One of the interesting sidelights of that particular debate is that in this era, a lot of what we do and invent in the commercial world is valuable in a way that was never anticipated by the people who were writing up the legislation for the Patent Office many years ago. In almost all cases, if a commercial company has something that is really valuable, it may decline to patent it, because it turns out that it's actually easier to defend it, to maintain it as a trade secret, than it is to maintain it as a patent. Because once a patent is published, there are so many ways around it. Basically by writing a patent you've given a blueprint to others not only of how to do what you've done, but also of how to find away around it so they won't have conflict issues in the Patent Office.

So here's an example where the 250-year-old technology of how to describe patents and protect intellectual property is just woefully inadequate to the modern era. In fact, until a decade or so ago, it was not even possible to patent an algorithm, which, of course, is the single most important thing you can invent in computer programming.

SH: I bet a lot of people didn't think of it that way. I know that some of us–those of us who worked in the industry–certainly are aware of that.

CL: Yes, if anything is really important, the company just keeps it secret. Mostly what patent portfolios are in the big companies is security against huge lawsuits for infringement of other, unrelated patents. When you see things like the collision that almost occurred between Digital Equipment and Intel a few years ago–they filed patent infringement suits against one another–you see the danger. In that case the lawyers took a look at what was going to happen, took a deep breath, and said, "Oh, my God, what have we done?" And they came to an agreement–they thought better of it and settled. So instead of having it blow up, it was all over in two or three months. And that was smart, but also instructive. The discovery motions would have gone on for a decade; it would have cost them both hundreds of millions of dollars to litigate the case. So now all of the big companies in the industry basically use their patent portfolios for what they call mutually assured destruction. I've literally heard it described in those words. Most of the big companies get into what are called cross-licensing agreements, which essentially ensure that they won't have the lawyers running the company into a decade-long intellectual property dispute with another major company that will drag them both down and kill them.

This happens because patent law is now entirely inadequate for modern inventions, especially in the computing industry. The ability of the courts to decide on issues associated with patent law that are, in today's technology,

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so complex that, it's brutal even to contemplate is woefully inadequate. You've got judges making decisions about intellectual property issues based on science that it would take them not the three months that the case is allotted, but three semesters just to understand at a superficial level. Judges, for all their education, much less juries of laypeople, none of whom have any hope at all of understanding nanotechnology or NP-Complete algorithms, just can't decide these cases.

SH: Yes, we call upon people who don't have the background to do those things.

CL: Absolutely. And they do the very best they can. And under the circumstances, they do, on balance, a pretty good job. But I think we're heading for an era in which we've got to do something remarkably different with intellectual property protection, and I don't mean only U.S. copyright issues, but international patent issues as well, or we're just going to grind ourselves into the ground.

SH: We're learning it's viewed quite differently outside the United States as well.

CL: Yes, indeed so. And some countries, of course, basically don't even recognize our intellectual property concepts. The computer industry has tremendous problems with exports of software to certain countries. It had been a really severe problem in India for many years. Some changes that occurred in Indian law about a decade ago have gone a long way to fixing that, which is why you see India as a site where so many software companies are moving large programming groups. But we today have that problem in spades, in China in particular. We see it to a lesser extent, whether it's just piracy or whether it's worse than that, in certain countries in South America, and particularly in Eastern Europe.

SH: Well, you have certainly whet my appetite for our keynote address. I've come to the end of my questions. Is there anything else that you want to share with the audience, prior to them seeing you in person?

CL: Well, this is going to be a lot of fun. You asked me earlier if I like teaching. One of the roles that I frequently play is to stand up on stage and through a series of stories and vignettes try to make complex technical issues as entertaining as possible. I try to explain to people why and how they are complex, why they're important, and why they're not as obviously solvable, or solvable in as easy a way, as they might think.

So I've been licking my chops about this particular speech, because so much of that preamble is stuff that your folks will understand immediately by their own direct experience. We'll be able to get at some much more interesting and entertaining stuff that's a layer or two down from that, which I hope will help them understand exactly what they can do to be influential, as you said, to get the attention of the right people to understand and act on the problem.

My father was a minister and he was a very scholarly minister. He had advanced degrees in ancient Greek and Hebrew, as well as in church history, so I used to go to church two or three times a week, because that's what you do when you're a preacher's kid. And I would listen to him give these extremely arcane sermons on subjects that had to do with the translation of this particular text in the King James Bible from the original Greek, and other unimaginably technical-some might say boring-topics that could be pretty dry to anyone but an expert. But his congregation was never bored, because my father was also a professional magician. In every sermon I ever heard him deliver, someplace during the middle of it, he would do a magic trick. The magic trick was always one that illustrated some aspect of the thing that he was trying to teach the congregation. So I learned that you can illustrate deeply complicated, technical, arcane issues in a way that can be appreciated by a lay audience, if you work hard enough at finding the right analogies to foster understanding.

I grew up to be a technologist, rather than a theologian, but my subject is also technical and just as inaccessible to nonexperts as anything my father's sermons covered. The lesson he taught me is that the difficulty of the subject matter doesn't excuse me from the responsibility to make my subject clear and intelligible when it is important for a larger purpose-in the case of technology, for having the public and various officials make good decisions about the use of technology in public policy. Finding a dramatic and accurate way to convey the important issues in a way that makes them accessible to a lay audience is my goal. After all, most of us are not going to go out and learn about the mathematics of encryption technologies, any more than my father's audience was going to go out and learn Attic Greek. But we're all going to be dramatically affected by the choices that are made in the next few years about security and privacy technologies on the Net, so we need an informed citizenry in order to get those decisions right.

It is wrong for people who are experts in a subject, no matter what it is, to think that they're excused from the responsibility of making the way in which their subject contributes to the public policy debate accessible to those who need to be a part of that debate. So I try to find ways to close the gap. When people walk away from one of my talks, I hope they leave with an understanding of something really profound and important, even if they understand it through amusing examples rather than by having me write the equations on the wall. What I want to do is get to the point where we can discuss some of these interesting issues in technology, security, and identity, and the ways in which they can conflict with one another, in a way that will make it accessible so the members of the audience can contribute meaningfully to the public policy debates about these important decisions. And I'm particularly pleased to be talking to the SLA because I think they will have a very large role to play in influencing decisionmakers to act in the right way.

SH: It sounds wonderful to me. I think it's going to be a really inspirational talk for launching our conference. Thank you for giving us this preview.

brand talk

Brand Perspectives

By Chris Olson

In January I discussed recognition cues and the role they play in branding. This month I consider a common dilemma faced by many information professionals embarking on a branding strategy: managing the brand as a product/service and as an organization.

Branding Crossroads

Branding tops many marketing "to-do" lists for 2004. Information service managers, marketing teams, and other colleagues are grappling with their branding strategies and action plans. Sooner or later planners arrive at the crossroads of brand perspectives. It can happen while developing a new product, transforming from a physically defined information service to a virtual one, or identifying the positioning strategy of an information service team. Each of these marketing scenarios involves branding, but depending on the perspective, each brand strategy will have a different approach.

Product Brands

I'll use the product development scenario as an example to show the impact a common marketing decision can have on a brand strategy. As a product is developed, various features are defined to set the product apart from competitors, and to make it recognizable and memorable. One of those features is the product name.

The name of a product can be unique with no ties to either the parent organization or product siblings. The brand name stands alone with no product line modifiers and its identity is based solely on product characteristics. Many information services use this strategy when naming their products and it's an approach frequently employed by large corporations. Procter & Gamble provides a good example of product-focused branding. Their products are known by unique brand names–Crest toothpaste, Tide detergent, Pampers diapers.

The advantage of product-focused branding becomes apparent when a product falters and the negative impact can be contained. However, not having ties to parent or other related brands means the product can not utilize the established brand recognition and positive perceptions already present in the marketplace. The new product enters the marketplace on its own merits and has limited access to positive brand memories generated by prior branding initiatives. Launching and sustaining a product-focused brand requires a strong strategy, committed resources, and a long range vision for the product.

Adopting a product-focused branding perspective has its merits, especially in situations where unfavorable perceptions are prevalent in the marketplace. Brand image perceptions such as unresponsive service, little value for the money, or obsolescence can weigh down a new product introduction. Marketplace brand perceptions could also be negative from prior products, which didn't live up to their promises. Turning around a negative image can begin with a strong, product-focused branding strategy. In fact, a new product that is able to change the perceptions of the organizational image, is called a "silver bullet," a concept coined by Regis McKenna in his book *Relationship Marketing* (1991). Following a product-focused brand strategy can distance the new product from negative perceptions and help pave the way for turning around the parent brand.

Parent Brands

Returning to our product name development scenario, another brand perspective is based on the organizational or parent name.

For discussion purposes, let's say the brand name of the organization is SmartInfo. The marketing team of SmartInfo is developing a new product called "HeadsUp." When it's time to confirm the new product's branding strategy, the team can name the product "HeadsUp" following a product-focused brand strategy, or brand the product "SmartInfo HeadsUp." The latter solution includes the organization brand in the product name, allowing HeadsUp to be associated with SmartInfo and–assuming that other products include the SmartInfo brand–its family of products.

As pointed out before, incorporating the parent brand into each product name allows new products to ride on the reputation and brand recognition coat tails of parent and sibling brands. The brand names of Microsoft products provide an excellent example of a parent brand strategy at work. Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Office, Microsoft Windows, Microsoft PowerPoint–every product brand name includes the name of the parent organization.

The parent name strategy is most successful when every product lives up to the reputation of the organization brand and projects its essence. In doing so, new product introductions contribute to brand recognition and recall in the marketplace, building confidence and a synergy in the parent brand. Obviously, if a product encounters difficulty in the marketplace the entire brand can suffer, implying that the decision to adopt a parent brand strategy is not to be taken lightly.

Product or Parent Brand Perspective?

The perspective you adopt for your information service brand strategy will depend on your specific marketplace conditions. No single strategy fits all situations. If you're currently working on 2004 marketing strategies and action plans, consider the perspectives I have outlined and the ramifications on your brand. Identify a brand strategy that best addresses your scenario, commit resources to it, and then execute the plan.

Contact Chris Olson at brandtalk@sla.org.

Vision, Mission and Core Values Statements

Special Libraries Association

Vision

The Special Libraries Association is the global organization for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners.

Mission

The Special Libraries Association promotes and strengthens its members through learning, advocacy, and networking initiatives.

Core Values

Leadership: Strengthening our roles as information leaders in our organizations and in our communities, including shaping information policy.

Service: Responding to our clients' needs, adding qualitative and quantitative value to information services and products.

Innovation and Continuous Learning: Embracing innovative solutions for the enhancement of services and intellectual advancement within the profession.

Results and Accountability: Delivering measurable results in the information economy and our organizations. The Association and its members are expected to operate with the highest level of ethics and honesty.

Collaboration and Partnering: Providing opportunities to meet, communicate, collaborate, and partner within the information industry and the business community.

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http://www.aplici.org/about/about.htm

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See y'all in Nashville!

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